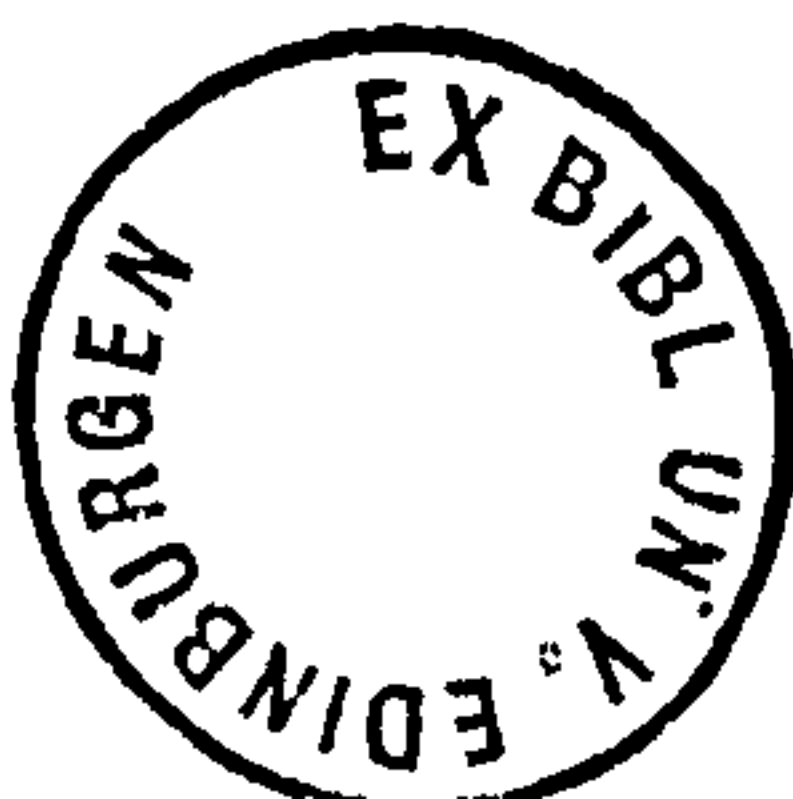


AN INTERPRETIVE STUDY OF THE NARRATIVE
OF THE GOLDEN CALF (EXODUS 32)

by
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DEDICATION

This work is affectionately dedicated to my mother and in memory of my father (1908-1979).

In seeking to understand, I must advance to the point where it is well nigh only the riddle of the substance that confronts me, and really no longer the riddle of the text as such.

Karl Barth, Preface to 2nd ed. of Epistle to the Romans as it appears in J. Moltmann, Theology of Hope (London: SCM Press, 1967), p. 380.

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ABSTRACT

The present investigation represents an exhaustive interpretation of the incident of the golden calf as it is related in Exodus 32. The study engages in a survey of hermeneutical paradigms from ancient to modern times to discover the insights of past generations of scholars, to aid in the understanding of the text, to provide a basis of continuity with the Jewish and Christian communities of faith through the centuries, and to determine the relationship between an interpreter and his Sitz im Leben.

The history of the passage's interpretation extends from the Old Testament scriptures through the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, the Hellenistic-Jewish writers, the Greek and Aramaic versions, the New Testament, the Patristic writers, the Rabbinical schools, mediaeval and post-Reformation eras to the rise and subsequent establishment of critical orthodoxy. The hermeneutical methods employed over this span of time vary greatly and have contributed to mutual suspicion within the theological academies. It is the attempt of the present investigation to clarify the issues confronting the academy and discern the contemporary or applicative significance that Exodus 32 has for the modern Church.

Central to this investigation has been the work of Brevard S. Childs whose "canonical criticism" methodology

is examined and its implications for the present study ascertained. The result in the final chapter is a detailed exegesis of the narrative of the golden calf, cognizant of the work of past scholarship and, hopefully, allowing the Biblical material to speak for itself within the context of its place in the sacred canon.

INTRODUCTION

The fundamental purpose of this thesis is to set out a full and exhaustive interpretation of Exodus chapter thirty-two. This material narrates the episode of Israel's apostasy at the foot of Mount Sinai when the nation erected the image of a golden calf to replace their worship of YHWH. The gravity of this sin committed on the threshold of Israel's existence as a theocratic nation has been reflected in subsequent writing about the event. Without question the sin of the golden calf represents one of the most important aspects of Israel's history. The volume of literature to be found on the subject of the incident is prolific and extends from ancient to modern times. It testifies to the seriousness in which the apostasy was held.

Interpretation is a complex activity. It involves a detailed linguistic and philological study of the text. Such a study is foundational to a proper understanding of the material. The text ever remains an external objective control to its own interpretation. Hence, all the tools of literary criticism need to be utilized to provide us with the most accurate text possible, that is to say one which probably best reflects the original. But interpretation involves more than this. The scholar must also be aware of the history of exegesis of a text. This is particularly so in a study

of Exodus 32. The account of the golden calf has received much attention and various approaches to understanding the material have been made such that an historical survey of the text's interpretation will be more significant than one might imagine at first and will undoubtedly contribute to our own understanding of the material.

The job of gathering the data which will comprise the history of the interpretation of Exodus 32 will be the general task of this thesis and the discussion of it will be considered a major stage in the interpretive process. When we get to modern times, we shall encounter mixed views about the importance of the past. The work of biblical commentators prior to the Enlightenment has been largely passed over during the critical era--and not without good reason. Pre-Enlightenment scholarship tended to treat the biblical material's original meaning synonymously with its contemporary meaning for the Church of its day. No attempt was made to separate these two aspects of understanding. As a result, exegesis frequently tended to be didactic and hortatory. By viewing the text as a unified whole, the pre-Enlightenment scholars interpreted the biblical material in a contemporary sense within broad thematic outlines. By contrast, scholarship over the last century or so, which we know as the critical era, has succeeded in driving a time-wedge between a text's original sense and its use in an

applicative sense in determining its contemporary relevance for the Church in the twentieth century. It has been the achievement of higher criticism to provide us with an awareness of the long history of the Bible's oral and written transmission. The critical era has served to uncover the mechanics of a passage's growth and development and to enhance our understanding of the political, cultural and religious milieu out of which the biblical material emerged.

Nevertheless, despite the limitations of pre-Enlightenment biblical commentary and polemic, the work of generations of exegetes does provide an additional external control for our interpretive skills. One is aware that the exegetical enterprise is ultimately an art and that one cannot be too dogmatic about one's conclusions. Indeed, modern critical scholarship occupies a place in the continuum of history and is therefore part of an interpretive process which continues to evolve. The paradigms used by one generation to facilitate their understanding of the biblical material are continually being called into question by the next. Yet that is not to say that the achievements of past generations are not without value. They add considerably to our present corpus of knowledge and enable us to be more conscious of the presuppositions under which we ourselves work. It will be the task of succeeding generations to refine and build upon the foundations laid in the past.

Highly significant in this regard is the contribution presently being made by "canonical criticism" associated with Brevard Childs at Yale Divinity School. This "new mood" in the field of hermeneutics represents a reappraisal of the role of both ancient and modern commentators in the full-orbed task of exegesis. Childs believes that because the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments constitute the confession of the Christian Church, the positioning of the biblical material within a canon must be of vital importance for the Church's theological reflection. Any exegesis of a passage, therefore, should take account not only of its structure within the whole canon, but how the text has functioned and been understood by the community of faith which treasured it. This will involve us in the scholarly work of saints of every age if we are going to take the task of "canonical criticism" seriously.

One might be tempted to dismiss Childs' work as a turning back of the clock to a time antecedent to critical orthodoxy. But to do so would be to grossly under-rate Childs' contribution to biblical studies. The present writer feels the work of Childs to be significant for our understanding of the biblical material and certainly worthy to be explored especially as it relates to our study of Exodus 32. By examining the role played by "canonical criticism" on the text of Exodus, and of the narrative of the golden calf in particular, it is hoped

that we shall pave the way for the climax of this present work, that is a detailed study of Exodus 32.

Childs offers us something new in biblical interpretation, and as with all things that are new, "canonical criticism" will need further development. The conclusions will need to be tested and sifted and our discussion will necessarily be tentative and provisional. This thesis represents an attempt to analyze, evaluate and develop the impact of "canonical criticism" on our present study. It is offered tentatively but with the conviction that it will make a significant contribution to an understanding of the story of the golden calf.

We can summarize the basic content of this thesis as follows: Chapter one represents a detailed study of the text itself and its place within the canon. Fundamental to an understanding of the material of Exodus 32 is the manner in which the story was viewed in the biblical material itself. Of primary importance also are the early Greek and Aramaic translations and the Samaritan text. Their emendations of the present Old Testament may better reflect, at times, an original Hebrew text. The contributions to our understanding of the golden calf narrative made by the Hellenistic-Jewish writers will complete the early survey of interpretation.

Chapter two carries the history of interpretation further from the New Testament and the Patristic Era, through the Talmudic age and the Middle Ages to the

Enlightenment and the rise of critical orthodoxy.

Chapter three is a detailed study of the critical questions raised in Exodus 32, a review of the many attempts to solve them and an evaluation of the various conclusions.

Chapter four is an attempt to explore Child's thesis on "canonical criticism" and the relationship it has to our study in Exodus and the insight it sheds on our understanding of the narrative of the golden calf. The latter half of the chapter includes the implications that "canonical criticism" has for Exodus 32 as perceived by the present writer.

The final chapter of the thesis will represent a detailed exegesis of the narrative of the golden calf. It will take into account the previous work of Old Testament scholars of every age. The task facing the present investigation, however, has not been merely one of collation, for care has been taken not to repeat the detail of earlier chapters, but of evaluation (with points of agreement and disagreement noted), and interpretation of ancient manuscripts' variant readings. Where it has been useful, alternative ideas concerning a text's meaning have been proposed and expounded. The specific textual problems of Exodus 32 have been discussed at length and the role of the narrative viewed as part of the sacred canon.

CHAPTER I

THE STORY OF THE GOLDEN CALF IN BIBLICAL AND POSTBIBLICAL LITERATURE

The episode of the golden calf which will form the basis of the present study is found in chapter 32 of Exodus. Earlier, in chapter 24, we learned of the ratification of the covenant that YHWH had made with Israel. Moses had instructed them in the ordinances of YHWH and the nation had readily acquiesced in obedience to the divine commands (vv. 7, 8). The chapter ends dramatically in the climax of Moses ascending Mount Sinai and disappearing into the cloud (v. 18). The scene is set, pregnant with possibilities, for the receiving of the Torah in the form of the tables of the testimony (לחת העדות).

In the midst of the solemnity of the moment, the narrative comprising the major portion of chapters 25-31 and 35-40 is interrupted with this enigmatic segment comprising the sin of the golden calf, the annulment and subsequent reconstituting of the covenant (chapters 32-34). It is likely that the pre-history of this unit is quite distinct from the predominantly priestly material in whose environment it finds itself, but be that as it may its inclusion in such a context by later redactors is as significant as it is fascinating. Throughout the

history of its interpretation numerous scholars, particularly Jewish exegetes though later Christians as well, were embarrassed by the incident of the golden calf and must have queried the wisdom of those responsible for its inclusion in the narrative of Exodus. It will be our concern in the present chapter to survey the various attempts to come to grips with and to understand from earliest times the episode of the golden calf.

The Golden Calf Related in Old Testament Scripture

An account of the actual apostasy involved in the worship of the golden calf is confined to the 32nd chapter of Exodus. The context has switched from Moses' receiving the Torah on the mountain (chapter 31) to a "meanwhile back at the camp" literary format. The narrative form has changed from the legalistic material usually associated with P to the epic style of JE. The content of the material has changed. The change may account for the difference discernible in literary form.

The story that greets us is one of incriminating eloquence, fast moving and vividly articulate. The scene is aptly depicted by Rabbi Goldman:

Towering over all and the background for all to see, is the mountain. At the foot of it an impatient, restive rabble, exaggerated by Moses' long absence from camp, hurls gold at Aaron, who converts it into a calf. Amidst a sudden burst of joy, bronzed, glittering bodies reeking with passion in carnal embrace, dance to the voluptuous strains of syncopation. The noise and uproar disturb the noble, calm solitude of Sinai's

erstwhile flaming peak, and from its slope Moses sends the Tables of the Law crashing against the idol. Below, the calf is ground to powder and stalwart Levites with swords drawn avenge their people's faithlessness. The mountain is quiet once again and on its top stands the Lawgiver with hands outstretched, his whole being dominated by one thought, the procuring of forgiveness.¹

Moses' absence from the camp is suggested as the most single significant event which prompted the apostasy. The people had become impatient at his return and demanded that Aaron make gods for them. The result was the creation of a molten calf (עֵגֶל דִּסְכָּה) from their gold earrings. The image is hailed as the "gods who brought Israel out of the land of Egypt," and even Aaron's attempt to proclaim a feast to YHWH misfires and the people's worship dissolves into idle reveling, indicated by the phrase וַיֵּשְׁבּוּ הָעָם לֵאכֹל וּשְׁתוֹ וַיִּקְחוּ לַצֹּחֶק.

On top of Sinai, YHWH acquaints Moses with the situation on the plain below and speaks to him of his intent to destroy the people and continue his redemptive purposes through a remnant--through Moses God will create a new and great nation! Moses, however, intercedes on behalf of Israel and his entreaty effectively stays the wrath of YHWH, such that God changes his mind and revokes his decision to destroy the nation.

¹S. Goldman, The Book of Human Destiny, III: From Slavery to Freedom (London: Abelard-Schuman Ltd., 1958), pp. 35-36.

Moses' descent from the mountain sees the shattering of the tables of the testimony, the destruction of the idol and the initial punishment meted out upon the people. Aaron offers a feeble excuse for his part in the conspiracy of the golden calf by providing a third perspective of the events that led up to the apostasy which is distinct from the narrator's (vv. 1-6) and YHWH's (vv. 7-10). Aaron's account significantly minimizes his own role in the construction of the image. His condemnation is not abrogated on the basis of his excuse nor is any other exoneration offered for him. For the remainder of the narrative, Aaron fades into the background and his role is assumed by the Levites who rally to Moses and become the instruments of retribution upon the apostate nation. With sword in hand the Levites are responsible for the death of 3,000 people, and are rewarded with ordination to the sacred office of hieroduli. The text does not make clear any special infamy of the 3,000.

As the chapter draws to a close Moses is depicted once again approaching the mountain, this time for the purpose of seeking atonement between YHWH and Israel. The threat of genocide has been removed but there remains still the possibility of God's punishment. The chapter ends on the brief note that YHWH sent a plague upon the people.

Although it is possible to discern a general unity of purpose within the narrative, it is also

apparent that Rabbi Goldman's emphasis upon the inherent or structural unity of the chapter does not adequately get at the heterogeneous nature of the material. He remarks that

. . . it achieves what is a sine qua non in a good history, a smooth continuity, uninterrupted by the starts and breaks of accidental episodes and digressions. Having made the people the nexus of its narration, it pursues it with a setness of purpose, intensity of concentration, and a precision of outline that are never relaxed.²

The chapter has not always been perceived thus, the critical observer may want several apparent discrepancies explained. For example, he may be curious why two punishments were believed necessary for the people's waywardness--both a massacre and a plague! He may wonder what became of Hur who was given joint charge of the nation with Aaron prior to Moses' ascent of Mount Sinai (Exod. 24:14). The use of the plural form in describing the singular image of the golden calf is certainly enigmatic. The discrepancy between the accounts of the construction of the calf may be problematic.. The whole issue of the abrogation of the covenant and its effect on the subsequent history of Israel may be seen to require further detailed scrutiny. We can be sure that issues such as these did not escape the acumen of ancient, mediæval and modern interpreters as we shall presently see. Yet it is interesting to note that the biblical narrative itself does not attempt

²Ibid.

to settle these issues. The material exists in its complexity and is communicated despite tensions in the story.

The Deuteronomic account of the episode in chapter 9 has a different chronology associated with the events surrounding and involving the apostasy. The narrative opens with a Mosaic perspective on the apostasy. Moses is on the mountain receiving the tables of the covenant when he learns of Israel's sin in making the molten image and YHWH's intention to destroy the nation. Moses' intercession for Israel, in this instance, follows his perception of the golden calf and the breaking of the tables, though it still precedes the destruction of the image. The Deuteronomic writer also includes a detail omitted in the intercession contained in the Exodus account: it is a particular intercession for Aaron who, we are informed, was also in danger of destruction.³

The correlation between the two accounts is further complicated when one notices that the actual prayer which Moses uses to entreat YHWH to revoke his

³A contradiction is not being suggested here between the two accounts for obviously if the whole nation is threatened with genocide save Moses alone, Aaron's destruction would necessarily be integral to that. Rather it is noteworthy that although the Exodus narrative implicitly condemns the action of Aaron, it is left to the Deuteronomic writer to specify the danger he incurred from God's wrath. But it is interesting in this context, in view of later attempts to exonerate the father of Israel's priesthood, that Scripture makes no such attempt and even, presumably by the 7th century B.C., the Deuteronomist makes his guilt in the apostasy clear.

threat of genocide (Exod. 32:11-13) is applied by the Deuteronomist to the people's rebellion at Kadesh-barnea (Deut. 9:25-29). However, the tension between the accounts is not difficult to resolve when one bears in mind the purposes of JE as over against those of D. D's concern is not with chronology per se, this is much more the intent of the Exodus narrative, though even here it is not the primary motivating force. Chronology will always play a subordinate role to the didactic purpose within the material. But within Deuteronomy the material clearly functions homiletically and with a hortatory emphasis. This being so the niggardly attention to chronological detail is lost in the major didactic purpose of the material. The readily discernible concern of this section of Deuteronomy (chapters 9 and 10) is to encourage Israel to desist from stubbornness, a phenomenon which had plagued their history. There they were perched on the verge of possessing the good land (אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַטּוֹבָה) which YHWH had promised would be theirs. Moses pleaded with them not to allow anything to stand in the way of their obtaining it by reminding them of other instances when they almost thwarted the redemptive plan of YHWH. Only Moses' intercession saved them from destruction evidenced in the recurring idea of Moses' lying prostrate before YHWH forty days and forty nights and YHWH's hearing his prayer (9:9,18,25; 10:10). So in his anecdotal treatment of Israel's stubbornness, Moses does not clearly

distinguish between the various occasions when the nations invoked God's anger; it is deemed appropriate to run them together and the effort is not made to follow any set chronological sequence. It is only reasonable, then, to deduce different chronologies in the accounts of Exodus and Deuteronomy on the basis of the different intentions of the writers.

The incident of the golden calf is alluded to again in Ezekiel 20:8 ff., where the prophet addresses the elders of Israel, enumerating the sins of their fathers. The sin of the golden calf is given prominence in the account by means of a tirade against idolatry. The apostasy is roundly condemned and no justification is sought for it. The term used to describe the sin is "rebellion" (וַיִּבְרֹחַ-בִּי) for the people desired the idolatrous worship of Egypt. The allusion to the apostasy is a brief one, simply listed among a number of others, the total effect of which is to denounce Israel's past behaviour vis-à-vis YHWH's long-suffering love and patient forbearing.⁴ The association of the golden calf with the idols of Egypt is a fascinating one. It may be that the calf was actually considered to be derived from an Egyptian deity, Apis at Heliopolis, Osiris, Mnevis or Ptah at Memphis, or Rā. Or, it may be that Ezekiel is simply referring to a mind set of idolatry

⁴In each instance, God withholds his hand for the sake of his name that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations (Ezek. 20:9,14,22).

which Israel had acquired in Egypt. The phrase, then, "nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt" (וְאֵת-גִּלְגָּלִי) וְאֵת-גִּלְגָּלִי would simply indicate an inclination towards idolatry, and a negation of the true worship of YHWH. It is possible to understand the meaning of Exod. 32:22 in this way, also, when we come to consider the text of Acts 7:39. One may suppose this to have been Luke's interpretation of the event.

The idea of a regression to pagan idolatry and a negation of their freedom from bondage in Egypt is taken up by Nehemiah after the Return. The episode of the golden calf is again seen in the context of a passage (Neh. 9:16ff.) in which the דִּבְרֵי of YHWH is contrasted with the wickedness of the people depicted in terms such as הִזְדִּירוּ ("they acted presumptuously"), וְיָצְאוּ לְשַׁחַד ("they refused to obey"), וַיִּקְשְׁרוּ אֶת-עֲרֵפֵם ("they stiffened their necks"). Of particular interest in this passage is that in quoting the idolatrous proclamation of Exod. 32:4, אֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹהֵיךָ, יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הָעֵלֹךְ אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, the plural forms are "corrected" to the more appropriate singular readings, זֶה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הָעֵלֶיךָ מִצְרַיִם. It could be that Nehemiah is quoting an original singular. However, it is also argued that it is unlikely that the more difficult reading of a plural construction would replace an appropriate singular construction and therefore that the more difficult reading is to be preferred.

It is possible that Nehemiah is quoting an original singular despite the preference for considering a more difficult reading as primary. In view of the undoubted influence on the phrase from I Kgs. 12:28 (discussed in chapter 5), it is likely that Nehemiah is reflecting a more ancient text. Obviously a singular rendering of verse 4 makes much better sense in the Exodus context. The present MT of Exod. 32:4 exhibits the effects of its use in a tirade against the two Jeroboamic calves in Dan and Bethel.

In a context which praises YHWH for his faithfulness and forbearance with Israel (Ps. 106), the episode of the golden calf warrants mention among the crimes of the nation. The psalm obviously reflects a cultic celebration, for the hymn quickly moves from a personal plea (vv. 4,5) presumably uttered by the priestly leader of the liturgy, to a communal rejoinder (vv. 6ff.). The cultic priest petitions God to remember him and deliver him and, after the congregation recites the sins of the nation through which Israel receives the grace of YHWH, the people rejoin the priest's petition with a collective entreaty for deliverance (v. 47). The hymn concludes with a communal response: "Let all the people say, 'Amen!' Praise the Lord." It is obvious from such a context that the apostasy at Mount Horeb was viewed with disdain. This is clear from a perusal of the particular passage within the psalm (vv. 19ff.), where indignation with the sin becomes virtual

incredulity and amazement that Israel could have committed such a heinous crime: "They exchanged the glory (of God) (כבוד) for the image of an ox that eats grass. They forgot (שכח) God their Saviour."

In addition to the above mentioned explicit references to the incident of the golden calf, there is undoubtedly a "borrowing" relationship with the story of the erection of Jeroboam's golden calves in I Kings 12:25ff. Here the accompanying proclamatory formula, הנה אלחין ישראל העלון בארץ אסרים, is identical with the statement in Exod. 32:4 (with the exception of the first word of the phrase). Obviously with Jeroboam's two calves the sentence containing the plural verb makes better sense than it does with the one calf constructed by Aaron. This close parallel seems to indicate some kind of dependence of one text upon the other, especially so when one bears in mind the apparent inappropriateness of the grammatical construction in the Exodus account. A comparative study of the material in Exod. 32:4, I K. 12:28 and Neh. 9:18 will occupy our attention in our survey of the history of interpretation.

The treatment of the episode of the golden calf in chapter 32 of Exodus and the interpretations of it in the Old Testament scriptures form an important basis for the work of later exegetes. The material is not fully comprehensible--by that I mean that the narrative and the subsequent viewpoints it evoked in relation to its content leave the interpreter with not a few riddles to

solve if he would make the material relevant to his own Sitz im Leben. We have alluded earlier to several questions he might put to the text. There are numerous others.

As we proceed through the study, we shall see how the Sitze im Leben of the various exegetes, to which they sought to relate the meaning of the text, determine the treatment they give to the material and affect their solutions to the problems posed in the scriptures.

The Golden Calf as Interpreted in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament

The material before us in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament is of a different type from that which we have studied in the scriptures themselves and the methods of interpretation often differ considerably from those employed by the canonical text, even from the later books of the Old Testament. One cannot assume for the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha any unity of thought, though certain common trends are recognizable. Each writer brings his own idiosyncrasies to his writing and is conditioned by his own situation which frequently determines the purposes he has in writing.

The non-canonical writers do not appear to be as vehement in their denunciation of the apostasy of the golden calf, when it is mentioned, as their canonical counterparts. This may be a reflection of a general atrophying of the threat posed by idolatry on the nation

of Israel. In other words, a greater degree of enlightenment in these later days may have resulted in a more tolerant attitude towards idolatry for it was viewed from a perspective that attached to it no degree of reality. However, generalizations in regard to the literature of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha vis-à-vis the Old Testament canonical text always run the danger of over-simplification and the distinctions between the two are often blurred. One is aware, for example, of the idea of vanity (in the sense of nothingness) which is associated with the worship of idols in the canonical material. A strong argument could also be made that the text in Psalm 106 reflects an attitude towards the making of the calf which would label the endeavours unthinking or stupid. Nevertheless it does seem more evident in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha that idolatry is scorned to a degree which is uncommon in the scriptures themselves. This may become more obvious as we continue.

In the story of Bel,⁵ Daniel's contempt of the idol is clearly perceived in defying the image, in laughter (vv. 7,19) and in his accusation of deceit (v. 7). The whole episode of whether or not Bel can consume the sacrificial food placed in front of him in the temple is treated with not a little amusement on the part of the writer, ostensibly Habakkuk ben Jesus of the tribe of Levi (v. 1). Daniel's accusation that the idol is

⁵Bel and the Dragon, verses 1-22.

man-made, contrasted with the living God who made heaven and earth (v. 5), succeeds in evoking the wrath of the naively innocent king. A trial is desired to discover the vitality of Bel. The food is placed before the idol and the temple doors locked to safeguard the food from theft. The story intensifies with the plot of the priests to enter the temple by secret doors and obtain the food and the counter-plot of Daniel to sprinkle the temple floor with ashes to reveal any tampering with the king's arrangement of the trial. The whole subterfuge was uncovered the next morning when the king returned to open the temple.

This legend of Daniel, if composed about 135 B.C., which some assume,⁶ may well reflect a period when the Jewish religion was bitterly persecuted, as at the time of Antiochus VII's rule in Syria. Such a thesis may explain the lack of distinctively Jewish beliefs and practices in the tract since nothing is said of law, temple or even the character of YHWH. The concern of the writer is to discredit the worship of idolators and to set it over against the worship of the only true and living God. One can then perceive the passage in terms of an encouragement to distressed Jews and a satire on their oppressors.

⁶Charles, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 656-7.

The Letter of Aristeas, probably from around the turn of the first century B.C.,⁷ has more to say about idolatry from a philosophical point of view. The author's clear intent in this epistle is to demonstrate the supremacy of the Jewish people, their religion, their law and their philosophy in an age overshadowed by the Greek thinkers. In his defiance of idolatry he suggests, first of all, that those responsible for making the idols, as creators, show themselves to be more powerful than the entities they worship, their creations.⁸ Secondly, he argues that statues of stone and wood cannot possess feeling and therefore their makers did nothing innovative so that they in turn cannot claim deification.⁹

For it would be utterly foolish to suppose that any one became a god in virtue of his inventions. For the inventors simply took certain objects already created and by combining them together, showed that they possessed a fresh utility: they did not themselves create the substance of the thing, and so it is a vain and foolish thing for people to make gods of men like themselves.¹⁰

This philosophical disputation reaches its greatest eloquence in the Apocrypha with the Wisdom of

⁷For a discussion of the possible dates for the Letter of Aristeas see R. H. Charles, ed., Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, vol. II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), pp. 85-87.

⁸Letter of Aristeas, 134.

⁹This latter argument was directed against Euhemerism which maintained that deification occurred to those who distinguished themselves in war or in the pursuit of mankind's good and received worship after their death (Charles, op. cit., II, p. 107n.).

¹⁰Letter of Aristeas, 136-7.

Solomon.¹¹ Here many of the concerns of the apologia of the Letter of Aristeas are continued and many indicate that both writers were Alexandrian Jews. In the midst of an historical retrospect of Israel in Egypt and the wilderness, the Wisdom writer inserts a lengthy dissertation on the origin and evils of idolatry. His solemn treatment of the subject begins sympathetically by describing the worship of nature. He is grieved that the worshipper could not discover the true God behind his works. He then turns to idolatry proper and, after a manner reminiscent of Deutero-Isaiah,¹² pours scorn and sarcasm on "those who worship a crooked piece of wood for which the workman can find no use save as an object of worship: a piece of wood not sound enough to be used for the building of a ship."¹³ The idea of seeking aid from such an image is held up to derision:

(For verily it is an image, and hath need of
help;)
And when he maketh his prayer for his goods and for
his marriage and children,
He is not ashamed to speak to that which has no life
Yea for health he calleth upon that which is weak
And for life he beseecheth that which is dead. . . ¹⁴

¹¹Wisdom of Solomon, chapters 13-15.

¹²Isaiah 40:18-20.

¹³Charles, op. cit., I, p. 519; also Wisdom of Solomon, 13:13 and 14:1.

¹⁴Wisdom of Solomon, 13:16-18.

On a more serious note, the author sketches the origin of idolatry and the evil that results from it. They came through a "vain error" after the manner of Euhemerus, the fourth century B.C. courtier of Cassander in Macedonia, who philosophized that brave warriors or benefactors became gods at death when they evoked worship from a grateful people.¹⁵ The Wisdom writer maintained that idolatry was "the beginning and cause and end of every evil."¹⁶

The entire Epistle of Jeremy, a much earlier piece of work than these others we have mentioned,¹⁷ treats idolatry as its major concern. The epistle is hortatory in nature constantly deriding the worth of idols--not only are they unable to speak and act: "Yet cannot these gods save themselves from rust and moths, though they be covered with purple raiment" (v. 12). The illogic of idols extends beyond their incapacities to perform functions to the inherent contradictions which their existence manifests:

And he that cannot put to death one that offendeth against him holdeth a sceptre, as though he were judge of a country. He hath also a dagger in his right hand, and an axe: but cannot deliver himself from war and robbers.¹⁸

¹⁵See note 6 above.

¹⁶Wisdom of Solomon 14:27.

¹⁷Probably a date around 300 B.C. Note the reference in the epistle to "seven generations" of captivity in Babylon (v. 3) which may give an indication of the writer's own time perspective.

¹⁸Epistle of Jeremy, 14-15.

The whole homily is full of sarcasm, scorn and condemnation, repetitive to a high degree, attacking both the idol and the idolator. It is directed to those members of the Jewish population who had decided to remain in Babylonia after the edict of Cyrus. They were encircled by the customs and beliefs of a pagan society and must have felt the strong temptation to assimilate themselves into it. Absent here is the wit of Bel and the Dragon which grew out of Jewish persecution, absent is the philosophy of the age of the imperialism of Greek thought. Here, rather is an earnest homiletician's plea that the people of YHWH forget not the rock from which they were hewed and in this it is more strongly reminiscent of the Old Testament prophetic oracles.

The Apocrypha does not allude to the sin of the golden calf specifically, for this one needs to turn to the writings of the Pseudepigrapha. In the opening verses of the Book of Jubilees, the writer introduces his work, both a history and a chronological system,¹⁹ which extends from creation to the giving of the law at Sinai. One feature of this introduction is the

¹⁹This is made clear in the prologue to the book which claims both these features:

"This is the history of the division of the days of the law and of the testimony, of the events of the year, of their (year) weeks, of their Jubilees throughout all the years of the world, as the Lord spake to Moses on Mount Sinai. . . ."

(Book of Jubilees, prologue.)

description of Moses receiving Israel's law and tradition which includes a reference to the apostasy of the nation. The text does not speak of a calf per se but it seems clear that the narration is alluding to it in verse 5 where the apostasy is described in terms of "transgressing the covenant" for Moses is still on Sinai and the covenant has only recently been enacted! Another parallel between the Book of Jubilee's apostasy and the Exodus account of the golden calf is the mention made in the former to YHWH's refusal to forsake his people despite the gravity of their sin (1:5) which is in keeping with the story in Exodus.

This opening section of Jubilees aims at giving an authoritative role to the legalistic codes which it contains. It claims to be Mosaic and its first chapter describes the encounter that Moses had with YHWH on Sinai. Much of the material of this description is taken from the Exodus sequence of chapters 32-34, and accounts for the 40 days and nights Moses spent on the Mount by ascribing the receiving not only the law but "the earlier and later history of the division of all the days of the law and of the testimony."²⁰ That is to say, the writer of the Book of Jubilees is concerned to define the traditions of the Jews as Mosaic in origin, a claim that was accepted as fact into mediaeval times. Jubilees was written at the turn of the first century B.C.,

²⁰Book of Jubilees, 1:4.

and as a manifesto of Jewish legalism at that time, is an important source book on Jewish religious practice at the time. The law had gained the upper hand in Judaic society and Pharisaism pervaded Palestine. This book, then, represents a rewriting of the history of Israel from a Pharisaic viewpoint--from creation to the establishment of God's sanctuary which would enable him to tabernacle with his people.²¹ Of particular interest to a history of interpretation is the fact that Jubilees has incorporated a great deal of Jewish midrash which has resulted in the work's being something of the nature of a Targum on Genesis and Exodus, "in which difficulties in the biblical narrative are solved, gaps supplied, dogmatically offensive elements removed, and the genuine spirit of later Judaism infused into the primitive history of the world."²²

The intellectual climate which existed in the Near East in 100 B.C. was certainly an interesting one, and it is crucial to understand its nature if one is to comprehend the perspective of the writer of the Book of Jubilees. The attacks of Hellenistic thought on Judaism had been severe and had sought to undermine the Jewish adherence to the law, arguing that it was never intended to have an everlasting validity and that it was not observed even by the founders of the nation. In the face

²¹Book of Jubilees, 1:27.

²²Charles, op. cit., II, p. 1.

of such hostility, the author of the Book of Jubilees seeks to defend Judaism, its laws and religious practices, he establishes a Mosaic authority for his work. In this regard, also, he endeavours to convey the message that despite Israel's failure to maintain obedience to the law and traditions, YHWH has continued to love them and has never forsaken his people. In this context, the author of Jubilees would not want to focus attention on the early apostasy of the golden calf, a turning away from the law a short time after it had been given--instead, God's faithfulness is placed over against Israel's waywardness, and YHWH's goodness juxtaposed with his people's sin:

And thus it will come to pass when all these things come upon them, that they will recognize that I am more righteous than they in all their judgments and in all their actions, and they will recognize that I have been truly with them.²³

A slightly earlier pseudepigraph, the Book of Enoch, also includes reference to the incident of the golden calf--this time in the form of a parable. Ostensibly Enoch had fallen into a deep sleep and had dreamed a dream which he related to his son Methuselah.²⁴ This dream-vision of Enoch, the second in the book, covers the history of the world from Adam to the Coming of the Messianic Kingdom. In the course of this history, the happenings associated with Sinai play an important

²³Book of Jubilees, 1:6.

²⁴Book of Enoch, 85:1,2.

role. Israel is depicted as a flock of sheep roaming in the desert, being cared for by the great and majestic Lord of the sheep. In the course of their wanderings the sheep were led to a "lofty rock" which one of their number, designated as "that sheep," ascended. While on the summit, unknown to "that sheep," the remainder of the flock became blind and wandered off indiscriminately. This incurred the wrath of the Lord of the sheep and when "that sheep" learned of it, it descended from the rock and approached the flock, discovered most of the sheep blinded and fallen away. Fear seized them and they immediately repented, but "that sheep," taking others with him, began to slay the sheep that had fallen away. In this way the status quo of the flock was re-established and the sheep returned to their respective folds. The dream continues with the building of a house for the Lord of the sheep, the falling asleep of "that sheep" and their continued pilgrimage to a pleasant and glorious pastureland.

This fascinating account of the sin of the golden calf comes from a book important as a pseudograph not only for the insight it gives us into the history of the theological development of the second century B.C., but also for the authority which was ascribed to it during the centuries that marked the transition to the Christian era. Both the Book of Jubilees and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs cite from it, and when one moves to the Christian era

itself, one notices that Jude seems to regard it as scripture,²⁵ as do several of the early Church Fathers after him including Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus and Tertullian.²⁶ The book came into existence at the time of the ascendancy of the Law when any spontaneous word from God was stifled and prophetic oracles quenched. The Law was claimed as the highest and final vox dei. As a result men, such as those responsible for compiling the Book of Enoch, were forced to resort to pseudonymous publication. They were enthusiasts and mystics who were eager to proclaim their visions relating to the nation's past, its present and future.

The narrative of Israel's apostasy in the Book of Enoch represents an attempt to retell the biblical account in the mystical form in which we have it. Yet, in the paraphrase, it has become something more akin to the nature of Targum. What is recounted in Enoch generally accords with the Exodus account but certain details are omitted, though significantly many fewer than those omitted by Jubilees. It will be obvious that no effort is made to mitigate Israel's apostasy, though the impression is certainly conveyed that not everyone present at the foot of the mountain was involved in the sin--albeit a majority were, for Moses "found the

²⁵Jude, 4ff.

²⁶R. H. Charles, op. cit., II, pp. 165, 181-2.

greatest part of them blinded and fallen away" (v. 33). The writer then proceeds to inform his readers that only the guilty were punished (v. 34). This conclusion is certainly not made plain in the Exodus account.

It is possible, also, to discern the presence of Aaron in the text of Enoch--a phenomenon which we have not encountered since leaving the books of the Pentateuch. In verse 31 there is a reference to "that sheep that was with him" as distinct from "that sheep which led them" (v.32). However, nothing much is said about Aaron for the writer is content to state that the sheep became blinded without specifying how the blindness came about. Similarly the passage makes explicit the role played by the Levites in the incident. They were responsible for the slaughter of the sheep which had fallen away. There is no reason for the second century B.C. author to divorce the passage relating to the ordination of the Levites from the episode of the golden calf.

The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha may suggest other explanations for the Levites' assuming the priestly office but none of these are necessarily seen as contradicting the testimony of Exod. 32. Hence the writer of the Book of Jubilees can indicate that the Levites were chosen to the priesthood because of their slaughter of the Shechemites (30:23) and that Levi himself was ordained by Jacob because he was the tenth son (32:3). Yet the Levitical tribe is depicted as one executing righteousness and judgment of Israel's enemies which

includes those who transgress the covenant (30:18,22). The massacre at Shechem is also viewed as instrumental in Levi's claim to the priesthood in the Testament of Levi (chapters 6-8). It becomes obvious that the ancients were not particularly anxious to settle for any single reason to describe Levi's ascendancy to Israel's priesthood. One could legitimately suggest this was entirely in keeping with the biblical witness itself.

One final matter of interest arising from the account of the Book of Enoch is not an omission of part of the Exodus narrative, but the very reverse. The pseudonymous writer is concerned to speak of Israel's repentance of the sin: "they feared and trembled at its (i.e. Moses') presence, and desired to return to their folds" (v.35). Indeed, from the Exodus account Moses gives the people the opportunity to repent with his call for commitment: "Whoever is on YHWH's side, let him come to me!" (Exod. 32:26), and it is clear from the biblical account that only the Levites responded to that call. Nevertheless it is apparent that, sometime prior to Moses' return to the summit of Sinai to plead for Israel's forgiveness, the nation must have exhibited some signs of repentance. The author of this section of the Book of Enoch is concerned to include this piece of midrash into Enoch's dream.

This survey of material from the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha serves to indicate not only the great

variety of presentations directed against idolatry in general and the sin of the golden calf in particular but also how the writers' Sitze im Leben have affected their treatment of their subject matter. The exegesis exhibits homiletical exhortation, apology, Scripture paraphrase and midrashic procedure. In general the material accords with the biblical witness in its condemnation of Israel's sin at Mount Sinai, though the accounts are very much condensed in their treatment of it. Aaron is not implicated in the apostasy, as indeed is also true of the later biblical material. The message of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha are one in declaring that idolatry remains the great threat to Judaism in regard to which the nation must ever be on the alert. The past experiences when Israel succumbed to such wiles were unfortunate retrograde steps for the development of the Theocracy, but the Coming of the Messianic kingdom was still a certainty, Israel's election remained intact and YHWH deigned to call them his people. The future shone brightly indeed.

The Golden Calf in the Hellenistic- Jewish Writers

In this section of our survey, three figures will occupy our attention: Josephus, Philo and Pseudo-Philo. These first century A.D. writers must be viewed against the backdrop of a Greek culture to which they are attempting to relate by making palatable Jewish belief to their heathen contemporaries. All three are Judaic

apologists who adopt different degrees of Greek thought to communicate the reasonableness of the Jewish faith. In turn, Greek philosophy has affected their interpretations of the biblical material.

Living at a crucial era in world history, these men were not yet exposed to the Christian polemic against the Jews, nor were they interested in claiming canonical authority. The limits of the canon of Hebrew scriptures had effectively been set and with the dispersion of the Jewish community throughout the Near East, the task of translating the scriptures became primary. It was hoped that the translations might provide a concerted defense of Judaism in the major cultural and intellectual centres of the known world. The lingua franca was Greek.²⁷ Greek philosophy and culture dominated the Eastern Mediterranean world. The Jewish apologists had a ready audience and a ready vehicle of communication.

Josephus

Josephus was a Palestinian Jewish soldier who was of priestly descent and philosophic education.²⁸ He surveys Jewish history in such a way as to instruct

²⁷Greek was widely spoken throughout the western part of the Near East. It ought to be realized that Aramaic was the lingua franca further east.

²⁸Josephus, Vita, I, lff.

his heathen readers and give them an appreciation for Jewish antiquity. With such aims it is not difficult to understand why Josephus combines the two periods of forty days on Mount Sinai covering chapters 25-31 and 33-34 of Exodus (cf. Exod. 24:18 and 34:28), and by so doing omits the entire golden calf episode! Ordinarily one might not take exception to the fact that an Old Testament story has dropped out of an account of Israel's history by an ancient. We have already noted comparable phenomena in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. This could be considered applicable to the case of Josephus were it not for the fact that ordinarily Joseph omits nothing of the nation's history in his works. The narrative of the golden calf is the most glaring exception and its omission is blatantly deliberate. Thackeray has suggested that Josephus' omission of the story was an effort "to avoid giving any handle to the malicious fables about the Jews current in his day."²⁹ Josephus alleges in his contra Apionem (II, 7[80]; 9[114,120]) that there was a pagan belief that the Jews were involved in the cult-worship of an ass. In view of that to include the apostasy of the golden calf in his treatment of Jewish antiquities would have been to supply ammunition to the anti-Semitic offensive. Josephus did not consider it expedient to include it in his text, instead he ponders upon Moses' absence from

²⁹H. St. J. Thackeray, Josephus: Jewish Antiquities, III, pp. 362-3 (n.).

the camp--how it caused great anxiety among the people who surmised that their leader may have perished. In this, Josephus is determined to portray the Israelites at their best:

Then, as time dragged on--for he (Moses) was full forty days parted from them--a fear seized the Hebrews that something had befallen Moses, and of all the horrors that they had encountered none so deeply distressed them as the thought that Moses had perished. . . . Imagining themselves, however, to have been bereft of a patron and protector, the like of whom they could never meet again, they continued in the deepest distress. . . .³⁰

Several postulates are introduced to account for Moses' delay on the mountain: he may have fallen prey to wild animals or possibly been taken back to divinity, and by reflecting on these matters the people were able to regain their composure. When, at last, Moses reappears, the camp is filled with joy, the tables of the testimony are shown to the people and the plans for the tabernacle are laid.³¹ The deviation from the biblical account is clear, in place of wild frenzy associated with calf worship, we encounter calm composure, in the place of terror, Moses is greeted with joy and in place of the shattering of the tables is heralded their exposition. The nation is insidiously vindicated from the great sin of the golden calf.

³⁰Josephus: Jewish Antiquities, III, 95, 98.

³¹Ibid., 99-101.

And not only the nation, but Aaron as well. We have already noticed that the role played by Aaron has already been minimized. Neither in the later biblical material nor in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha is the effort made to implicate the father of Israel's priesthood, although, in fairness, one ought to be aware that neither is he explicitly exonerated from the sin. Josephus does not specifically refer to Aaron throughout this narrative, but elsewhere he frequently eulogizes him as, for example, in Jewish Antiquities III, 188 where he refers to him as "the man whose virtues rendered him more deserving than all" to obtain the dignity of priesthood. Being of priestly stock himself, it is not surprising that Josephus should engage in such rhetoric.

Philo

Located in Alexandria, this loyal Jew has inculcated much Greek thinking in the process of his prolific writings. Philo was a philosopher--whether Platonic, Neo-Pythagorean or Stoic is beyond the scope of this investigation--who employs perhaps both Hellenistic allegory and rabbinic midrash in his interpretation of the scriptures. He is best known for his allegorical understanding of the biblical material, but he not uncommonly uses another level of interpretation--that of the literal sense of a passage. In our example of the golden calf, it is this latter type of

interpretation that Philo employs in his commentary on the Exodus story. By literal interpretation one does not mean a comprehension of the text in any original sense intended by the author, it simply implies an acceptance of the material as historical (which his allegorical methodology tends to nullify). He explains meaning by spontaneous paraphrase which smacks of artificiality but is no less helpful for that, for ultimately Philo is a preacher whose primary aim is to exhort his reader to experience and live the presence of God.³²

Philo deals with the episode of the golden calf among his writings known as the Exposition, which takes the form of general topics of a biographical nature. Our concern is with the Books of Moses. At the outset of the first book the purpose of the writings is stated: it is to acquaint the Gentile world with the story of the great lawgiver. There is very little allegory in these books, and that which is present is almost wholly confined to the explanations of the priest's vestments and the tabernacle edifice. Moses' life is treated under the headings of king, lawgiver, priest and prophet. As a result there are several anomalies discernible in the material, for example, nothing is said of the theophany on Sinai while the story of the golden calf

³²S. Sandmel, "Philo's Environment and Philo's Exegesis," Journal of Bible and Religion, XXII (1954), 251.

is related twice!³³ Repeatedly, Moses is conceived of as a paradigm of man's walk with God in obedience, a role commonly depicted in the biographies of the patriarchs.

In general, Philo remains fairly faithful to the sacred text of scripture although he confesses that he makes use of the Tradition of the Elders.³⁴ Yet there are few of the legendary accretions and embellishments attached to his treatment of the biblical material which one might more readily associate with the Book of Jubilees and even at times, the other hellenistic-Jewish writers. Nevertheless, Philo excels in amplifying the text for he considers his task one of interpreting the facts of scripture. This is certainly evidenced in his account of the golden calf.

Philo's contempt for idolatry and its practice in Egypt is easily perceived in his work; and is reminiscent in its polemic of the Letters of Aristeeas and Jeremy:

What of the worshippers of the different kinds of images? Their substance is wood and stone, till a short time ago completely shapeless, hewn away from their congenital structure by quarrymen and wood-cutters while their brethren, pieces from the same original source, have become urns and footbasins or some others of the less honourable vessels which serve the

³³Philo, Moses, II, 161-173 and 270-274.

³⁴H. St. J. Thackeray, Philo, VI, p. xvii.

purposes of darkness rather than of light.

For as for the gods of the Egyptians,
it is hardly decent even to mention
them. . . .³⁵

This disdain of idolatry is not minimized in his treatment of the sin of the golden calf although the attempt is made to acquit, to some degree, the guilt of the entire nation. Those responsible for the apostasy are variously described as "men of unstable nature," "unrestrained," "impious."³⁶ It is apparent that Philo does not consider all the people to have been guilty of the sin, for he observes that Moses perceived that the contagion had not extended to everyone and that "there were still some sound at heart and cherishing a feeling of hatred of evil."³⁷ The reason he assumes that they did not rise with the Levites to Moses' challenge was that they lacked courage for they feared, on the one hand, the vengeance of Moses and, on the other, the onslaught of an insurgent mob. So they remained quietly uncommitted awaiting the eventual outcome of events.

In stark contrast to the "principal leaders in godlessness"³⁸ whom they slew, the Levites stand out as paragons of virtue. They had, all the while, remained faithful to YHWH, "for their sentiments had been

³⁵Philo, *On the Contemplative Life*, 7-8.

³⁶Philo, *Moses*, II, 161.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 167.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 274.

hostile to the offenders almost from the first moment that they saw their misconduct."³⁹ Indeed, according to the later account the Levites had been biding their time, waiting for someone who would champion their righteous cause and lead them in attack upon the apostates.⁴⁰ The net result of all this is a picture somewhat removed from the narrative in Exodus. Rather than the entire nation's being considered guilty of the heinous crime of idolatry and including in that guilt the person of the future high priest, Aaron, Philo's account represents a significant departure from the plain meaning of the biblical text. He indicates that only a small number of people were guilty, that there was even a righteous opposition party, the vast majority of Israelites being caught in the tension between the two groups and seeking to be invidious to neither. Aaron is not mentioned at all!

Philo's implied defense of the nation of Israel is equalled only by his attack on Egyptian idolatry. There is no doubt in the Jew's mind that the fables of Egypt were decisive in Israel's backsliding, where else would they have learned the corruption of idolatry having only recently departed from that land? Indeed Philo simply assumes an equation between the golden bull and

³⁹Ibid., 172.

⁴⁰Ibid., 273.

the deity ascribed to Apis.⁴¹ It is fascinating to realize that, living in Alexandria, Philo is in no delusion that bull worship in Egypt was directed towards the living beast, yet he maintains a parallel between worship ascribed to Apis and that ascribed to the golden calf since it was but "an imitation of the animal held most sacred in that country."⁴²

Elsewhere Philo cannot resist the temptation to moralize. In his rather lucid account of the nature of the worship of the calf, he heaps up the indulgences of the apostates only to remark that they were so taken up with their carnal pleasures^{as} to be unaware of their end for "justice, the unseen watcher of them and the punishments they deserved, stood ready to strike."⁴³ Again, as the corpses of the perpetrators of the idolatrous crime lay rotting in the market-place, the silent majority of the nation looked on with pity but learned the lesson of disobedience to God and resolved themselves to avoid such an execution in the future. And again, on the definition of truth from which the nation had turned, Philo is quick to moralize. The addendum could hardly be considered necessary for his purpose of interpreting the biblical text, but the beauty of style and the incisiveness of his description predispose one to a greater

⁴¹Philo, Moses, II, 162.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

appreciation of his writing. Philo depicts Moses stupefied by the nation's willingness to substitute a falsely invented fable for:

. . . the bright radiance of truth--truth on which no eclipse of the sun or of all the starry choir can cast a shadow, since it is illumined by its own light, the intelligible, the incorporeal, compared with which the light of the senses would seem to be as night compared with day.⁴⁴

When the character of Moses is described in this episode, he is conveyed, above all, as one of great passion who stands serenely above all his contemporaries. He is intimate with God, a man of great piety who desires to linger in God's presence even when chaos has broken loose at the foot of the mountain, decisive in calling for repentance, appalled and amazed at Israel's quick backsliding, and sensitive to God's heartache in the matter.⁴⁶ But let it be conceded that this portrayal of the lawgiver is very much in keeping with the picture we perceive of Moses in the Exodus narrative.

As one studies Philo unpacking his interpretive wares one is constantly drawn to the perception that in the writings of this man there is a great sensitivity and love for his people and his religion. At one point in the narrative he depicts them as excelling every

⁴⁴Ibid., 271.

⁴⁵So much so that he "became another man, changed both in outward appearance and mind. . . ." (Moses, II, 272).

⁴⁶Ibid., 271.

other nation in clearness of vision.⁴⁷ Despite his hatred of idolatry and his scorn of Egyptian religion, he bends as far as he considers it legitimate to defend the nation from undue criticism. He seeks to make explicit in his interpretation what he considers implicit in the biblical text, often filling gaps and even departing somewhat from some biblical implications. Yet always he seeks to be faithful to the Old Testament witness. The chronology of the Exodus narrative is followed religiously and in keeping with Exod. 32:25-29 he does not doubt that the golden calf incident formed the catalyst which brought about the inauguration of the Levitical tribe as a priestly sect as a reward for their diligence and bravery. Unquestionably Philo takes to the text the assumption that the Pentateuch as a whole was written by Moses himself, and his great respect for both the law and the lawgiver is clearly perceptible in all his writing and not least in his treatment of the sin of the golden calf.

Pseudo-Philo

Although Pseudo-Philo is, in reality, a pseudopigraphon probably written by a Palestinian Jew at a time shortly after the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D., yet its justification in being considered in this section on Hellenistic Jewish writings is due, in

⁴⁷Philo, Moses, II, 271.

part, to its earlier transmission in Greek and, in part, to its preservation under the name of Philo. The book itself, The Biblical Antiquities of Philo, is something of an enigma, for although it was first printed in 1527 in Basel, it went unnoticed until the nineteenth century and although it is generally agreed to have been written in the first century A.D., it is strange that there are no clear citations from it until the twelfth century! Yet it is important for our consideration for the light it sheds on the history of Jewish interpretation at the end of the first century A.D. It is substantially a midrashic work yet it represents an important link between the early haggadah of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha and rabbinic midrash.⁴⁸

The Biblical Antiquities of Philo represents a biblical history from Adam to Saul in an abridged form, but including information not known elsewhere. The author's aim, it seems, is to supplement existing biblical narratives by injecting a greater religious tone into much of the material and by stressing certain great truths.⁴⁹ He writes authoritatively, seemingly convinced that his work is on a par with the scriptures. One great concern which is particularly pertinent to the

⁴⁸M. R. James, trans., The Biblical Antiquities of Philo, The Library of Biblical Studies (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1971), p. ix.

⁴⁹Ibid., (1917), pp. 33-34.

present study is this anonymous writer's dread that his people lapse into idolatry and take on a comparable nature with the Gentiles.

There is a very considerable amount of midrash in Pseudo-Philo's description of the episode of the golden calf, for example he suggests the reason that the people desired gods in Moses' absence on the mount was not so much the uncertainty of Moses' return but their desire to be like other nations. Again, the great discomfort of Moses' perception of the image is depicted graphically in terms of a woman travailing in the birth of her firstborn, imagery that finds an echo in the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁵⁰

. . . and his hands were opened and he became like a woman travailing of her firstborn, which when she is taken in her pangs her hands are upon her bosom, and she shall have no strength to help her to bring forth. And it came to pass after an hour he said within himself: Bitterness prevaieth not forever, neither hath evil the dominion alway.⁵¹

Another interesting accretion, not at all indicated in the Exodus account and very typical of Rabbinic midrashim, is the observation that the writing on the tables which Moses gazed upon at the foot of Sinai had mysteriously disappeared--hence his reason for breaking them. Pseudo-Philo is content simply to postulate the mystery, a fuller story is found in other

⁵⁰Hodayoth, 3:7-10.

⁵¹Biblical Antiquities of Philo, XII, 5-6.

Midrashim. Pirke Rabbi Eliezer indicates that "the writings fled from off the tables."⁵² Although it might be possible, in this instance, to argue that the covenant had been nullified since the contract itself suffered erasure and destruction, the entire tenor of the work would indicate otherwise. In the dialogue on the top of Sinai prior to Moses' descent, the note of impending doom is not struck for the people, instead, the idea of an abrogated covenant is merely a possible consideration: "What and if the promises are at an end which I made to their fathers . . . ?"⁵³ and, unlike the biblical account, it seems very unlikely that an abrogation of the covenant would ever be actualized, for even in its consideration, plans are already afoot for God to forsake his people only temporarily before turning again and making peace with them.⁵⁴

Aaron, too, is seen in much better light than he is seen in the Exodus narrative. There the father of Israel's priesthood is perceived in terms of a weak, ineffectual, compromising leader. Here the contrary is the case. Neither is Aaron's defense taken on implicitly, that is to say, Pseudo-Philo does not merely ignore Aaron's role in the apostasy. Rather, we are explicitly informed that Moses' brother attempted

⁵²James, op. cit., p. 112n.

⁵³Biblical Antiquities of Philo, XII, 4.

⁵⁴Ibid.

to dissuade the people from their apostasy, instructing them to have patience for Moses' return and confidently affirming that the lawgiver would return. The people, however, do not listen--only they are the instigators and perpetrators of the crime. A second excuse offered for Aaron is that of fear, he was afraid of what the people might do to him for they had become strong. Finally, the account of the construction of the golden calf conveniently excludes Aaron from all responsibility in the making of the image. He had simply asked for the earrings of the dissidents' wives, it was the people who collected the jewelry and, according to Pseudo-Philo, it was they who placed them into the fire out of which emerged a molten calf. The nature of that emergence is not specified!⁵⁵

⁵⁵Of added interest to these attempts to exonerate Aaron, Pseudo-Philo also endeavours to minimize the sin of the nation, much like Philo, by differentiating between the real culprits and those who, like Aaron, stood on the sidelines, too afraid to raise any resistance to the idolatrous plot. To enhance his idea of such a distinction, he omits the significance of a strong group of Levites ready to take vengeance on the apostates. Philo was intent on emphasizing this determined, forceful tribe which was critical of the calf-worship. Pseudo-Philo, on the other hand, is content with a meek, frightened silent majority which was at a loss to do anything constructive about the situation. Pseudo-Philo's means of ascertaining who were guilty and who innocent was undoubtedly ingenious: after drinking the water, a trial which Moses subjected them to, the faces of the innocent shone while the guilty lost their tongues. (Biblical Antiquities of Philo, XXI, 7). The more common story was that the beards of those who had sinned appeared gilt--a detail which was occasionally embodied in mediaeval pictures of the scene. (James, op. cit., p. 112n.).

Among other recognizable differences with the biblical material, the text of Pseudo-Philo introduces a variation on the Moses' prayer of intercession, and reflects a desire by the author to magnify the greatness of YHWH and to stress the truth of Israel's election. In this short treatise, one catches something of the depth of religious fervour this writer has for his God and the rich love he exhibits towards his people. In much the same manner as Isaiah, he begins by associating God's relation with Israel in terms of a vine--grown with a vineyard--emphasizing their dependence one upon the other for it is the glory of YHWH which nourishes the vineyard and the vineyard, in turn, which brings glory to God:

If therefore thou have not pity upon thy vineyard, all these things are done in vain, Lord, and thou wilt have none to glorify thee. For even if thou plant another vineyard, neither will that one trust in thee, because thou didst destroy the former. For if verily thou forsake the world, who will do for thee that that thou hast spoken as God? And now let thy wrath be restrained from thy vineyard the more (because of) that thou hast said and that which remaineth to be spoken, and let not thy labour be in vain, neither let thine heritage be torn asunder in humiliation.⁵⁶

Pseudo-Philo's treatment of the episode of the golden calf is a particularly interesting one when one considers that he is generally more selective in his material than Josephus. Here, however, he chooses to narrate the incident of Exod. 32 in some length whereas

⁵⁶Biblical Antiquities of Philo, XII, 9.

Josephus omits it altogether, and in so doing Pseudo-Philo accords with the Rabbis who declare that the account is to be read and translated in the synagogue.⁵⁷ There are also other instances when Pseudo-Philo seems to reflect much more the thinking of the Rabbis than the hellenistic-judaism of Josephus and Philo.⁵⁸

It is clear from this survey of the Hellenistic-Jewish writers that they each deal with the incident of the golden calf in their own idio-syncratic ways. The result is that they all differ greatly from each other because each is writing out of his own background and with his own specific aims in mind. Josephus is concerned to avoid furthering the cause of pagan offensives upon the religion of Israel, so he omits the entire embarrassing episode. In contrast, both Philo and Pseudo-Philo attempt a modified apologetic of the apostasy, each concerned to acknowledge the heinous nature of Israel's crime and yet to mitigate, to some degree, the role played by Aaron and the nation. Philo, however, uses his apologia to heap condemnation on the idolatrous faith of Egypt and in so doing betrays traces of a philosophy which has imbibed Greek thinking. Pseudo-Philo, on the other hand, writing later in the

⁵⁷Megillah, 25a.

⁵⁸E.g. in his treatment of Moses' making the people drink the water which had received the golden remnants of the calf (Exod. 32:20), Pseudo-Philo considers it a means of differentiating gradations of sinners (cf. Num. 5:21f.), so also do the Rabbis (Abodah Zarah, 44a; Palestinian Talmud 3, 19a; Palestinian Targum).

same century, undertakes his defense in a manner more akin to Rabbinic writings to which we shall shortly turn for consideration.

The Golden Calf in the Early Versions

The Greek Versions

The Septuagint

The translation of the episode of the golden calf in the LXX is important for our study not only for the light it itself sheds upon an understanding of the text but also in view of the fact that it is this version of scripture which was used by Philo, Josephus, the New Testament writers and the early church fathers. The need for a Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures arose on account of the large number of Israelites who took part in the Dispersion after the reign of the Ptolemies who succeeded to the government of Egypt. During the third century B.C., the Jewish colony in Alexandria was enlarged by Egyptian conquests in the Middle East and continued to flourish. The need for the Alexandrian Jew to have ready access to the sacred literature of his religion in the common Greek tongue became paramount, for the Israelite had so integrated himself into the Alexandrian community that his grasp of Hebrew had been relinquished just as in Palestine Aramaic had taken the place of the "sacred tongue." The Septuagint, or Greek version of the Old Testament emerged as a result.

Traditionally ascribed to seventy pious elders of Israel who completed the work in total agreement within seventy-two days,⁵⁹ the LXX acquired the character of inspired writings and was held in high esteem. Today, however, the LXX is considered to be a heterogeneous composition, produced at various times by men of different viewpoints⁶⁰--though undoubtedly originating at the beginning of the Ptolemaic era. It was an inaugural translation work of the Hebrew Bible and, as such, it carried with it the defects of such a work.⁶¹ Besides, Hebrew had been acquired as a second language in Egypt from "teachers of very moderate attainments,"⁶² and it reflected early Hebrew texts which are now extant and which were as yet unpolluted with certain letters difficult to distinguish.⁶³ With a natural propensity for error and corruption it is to be expected that the LXX is frequently at variance with the Masoretic text. Yet when one considers these circumstances in which it was

⁵⁹See Letter of Aristeas. Several later Christian writers (Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Cyril of Jerusalem, Augustine, etc.) went further to embellish Aristeas' account by explaining that the seventy came to the same conclusions independently. (H. B. Swete, An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek (Cambridge: University Press, 1900), p. 14).

⁶⁰Swete, *ibid.*, p. 315f.

⁶¹A. F. Kirkpatrick in Expositor V, iii, p. 268.

⁶²Swete, *op. cit.*, p. 446.

⁶³See Swete's discussion on this, *ibid.*, pp. 315-323.



written, "it is a monument of the piety, the skill, and the knowledge of the Egyptian Jews who lived under the Ptolemics, and is an invaluable witness to the pre-Christian text of the Old Testament."⁶⁴ And although one recognizes the need to handle it with caution, the LXX remains a valuable aid at recovering a text of the Hebrew scriptures which is no longer extant, and oft-times its rendering is decidedly preferable to the Masoretic text.

The features of the translation are occasionally accidental, but much more often they are characteristic of the translators' principles and methods. First, the version aims at fidelity and often seeks to reproduce the Hebrew idiom word for word. This literalness may result in a rather stilted Greek rendering, but does succeed in reproducing the precise Hebrew equivalent:

1. A word for word literal translation:⁶⁵

- a. verse 15: "on one side and on the other"

(ἐνθεν καὶ ἐνθεν ἦσαν
γεγραμμενα) for אֵל וְאֵל
הַכְּתוּבִים .

- b. verse 27: the constant repetition of the

phrase "each his . . ." (ἐκάστος τοῦ...)
 for וְאֵל אֵל .

⁶⁴Swete, op. cit., p. 330.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 323.

c. verse 34: the effort of the Greek to copy precisely the terminology of the Hebrew in YHWH's commission to his angel who would go "before your face" (πρὸ προσώπου σου) for לְפָנַי. (Interestingly the same terminology is not followed in verse 11.)

2. Another reflection of loyalty to the sacred text is the transliteration⁶⁶ of Aaron's proper name:

Ἀαρὼν for אֶהְרֹן.

However, as we have already stated, the LXX does not always adhere strictly to the original text, it often amplifies or omits, interprets or refines. Sometimes this reflects a different underlying text than our present sources suggest, at other times it indicates an initiative taken on the part of a translator:

1. Slight amplifications:⁶⁷

- a. verses 4, 15, 19, 29: In place of the singular Hebrew construction, the LXX renders a plural (αἱ χεῖρες) which makes better sense in the context.
- b. verses 7, 13: λέγω is inserted before a quotation.
- c. verses 11, 13, 20, 29, 32: Pronouns are added which are not expressed in the Hebrew.
- d. verse 19: the definite article is supplied.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 324.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 325.

- e. verse 27: the LXX adds the conjunction,
"and."

2. In several instances the expansions of the MT are more substantial which may be indicative of differences in the Hebrew original:

- a. verse 7: The LXX more nearly reflects the Hebrew rendering of Deut. 9:12 by enlarging the rather curt לְכָל-רָחוֹק to (βάδιζε τὸ ράχος, κατὰ βῆθι ἐν τεύθει).
- b. verse 13: The promise made to the patriarchs is enhanced with the addition of superlatives: I will greatly multiply (πολυπληθυνῶ —) your seed as the stars of heaven for multitude (τῷ πλήθει). This latter expression is familiar in Deuteronomy where the additional לְכָל occurs on three occasions.
- c. verse 15: The LXX indicates that these were "tables of stone" (πλάκες λίθιναι). This description of the tables may well suggest an original rendering in the Hebrew text, parallel to Exod. 31:18 where the tables are likewise specified.
- d. verse 18: The addition of οὐρου at the end of the poetic construction may indicate that the word לְכָל has dropped out of the MT, or it may be considered as an attempt

to supply a comprehensible conclusion to an otherwise enigmatic poem.

- e. verses 22, 31: Proper names are supplied to specify to whom a speech was addressed.
 - f. verse 32: By adding "forgive (it)" (ἄφεσις) to the abrupt end of Moses' intercession for his people, the LXX is making good an aposiopesis.
 - g. verse 34: The LXX supplies an additional verb, "descend" (καταβηθι) in YHWH's instructions to Moses, possibly to remind the reader that the intercourse was still taking place on the summit of Sinai or it may be translating a word which existed in a Hebrew original.
 - h. verse 34: By adding "the place" (τοῦ τόπου) the LXX is making good an obvious omission in the MT.
3. At several points the Greek rendering is shorter:
- a. verses 1, 4, 7, 9, 11, 23: "the land of Egypt" is shortened simply to "Egypt."
 - b. verse 2: □□'□□ is omitted. As we shall discover in later discussion, the idea of sons wearing earrings presents problems for the translators. If their dilemma is justified, it would appear that the MT might represent a more original text.
 - c. verse 8: The LXX omits "molten" (πικτωμένη).

- d. verse 8: Codex Vaticanus omits "and have sacrificed to it" (וַיִּזְבֹּחַ לוֹ-ל).
 - e. verse 9: The entire verse is excluded from the LXX account. This may suggest that the verse was not in the original but only later interpolated into the Exodus narrative from Deut. 9:13.
 - f. verse 11: Codex Alexandrinus omits "Lord."
 - g. verse 12: The pronoun "them" is omitted after "to kill."
 - h. verse 12: "From off the face of the earth" becomes "from off the earth."
 - i. verse 29: A second "to-day" (וַיְהִי) is omitted in the Greek text--it may have appeared to be too obvious to include it.
 - j. verse 32: The LXX does not include the particle of entreaty, "I pray thee" (נָא).
4. There are some minor changes:
- a. verse 4: the pronoun is changed from a singular (לְיָהוָה) to a plural (αὐτοῖς). Presumably the MT is making reference to the gold per se whereas the LXX has the earrings in mind.
 - b. verse 30: The LXX changes "perhaps" (לָמָּד) to "so that" (ὥστε) and in so doing reduced any question of doubt which relates to the nation's being pardoned by YHWH.
5. There are changes of person:

- a. verse 4: The proclamation of the golden calf as Israel's gods is placed by the LXX^B, in the mouth of Aaron and not the people's. It may suggest that originally Aaron was responsible for the utterance and only later was the text tampered with and the proclamation placed in the people's mouth in an attempt to exonerate Aaron.
 - b. verse 6: The series of plural verbs in the MT, "rose up" (יָסָדוּ), "offered" (זָבְחוּ) and "brought" (בָּרְאוּ) are translated in the third person singular referring to Aaron (ὁρθρίσας, ἀνεβίβασεν, προσήνεγκεν). Like the MT, the LXX has the plural construction in the latter part of the verse.
 - c. verse 8: The LXX understood אָנֹכִי as a second person singular verb which appears to make better sense than the MT's perception of it as first person singular despite the fact that the consonantal text is the same.
 - d. verse 13: Part of the direct speech which Moses attributes to YHWH by quoting it in first person becomes indirect speech in the LXX where the shift is to the second person.
6. There are name changes:
- a. verse 13: the older name of Israel is

recalled, "Jacob." This change makes for a more familiar trilogy.

- b. verse 30: The Divine Name is changed from the tetragrammaton to τὸν Θεόν.

7. Other significant changes:

- a. verse 11: "A strong hand" is rendered in the LXX as "your outstretched arm" betraying the influence of Deut. 9:29.
- b. verse 29: A difficult imperative form, "fill" (לִלְבֹּא) receives an indicative meaning in the LXX "you have consecrated" (ἐπληρώσατε).
- c. verse 34: The LXX fails to repeat the same verb rendered "to visit" (MT: וַיִּבְרַח וַיִּתְּנֵם). It utilizes two different verbs (ἐπισκέπτωμαι ἐπάξω).

8. Frequently the translators have sought to interpret words which have needed explanation,⁶⁸ difficult words and phrases are exchanged for more intelligible ones or there may be traces of haggada:

- a. verse 4: The nature of the tool (וְכַתֵּב) which Aaron used to fashion the molten calf is perceived by the LXX as a "writing implement" or "stylus" (τῇ γραφίδι).
- b. verses 10, 11, 22: The significance of the anger of YHWH "burning" (וַיִּבְרַח) is that

⁶⁸Swete, op. cit., p. 326.

it is an intense anger (θυμωθεὶς
ὀργῇ).

- c. verses 12, 14: Moses' plea for YHWH's repentance (תַּעֲרַב-לִּי וְתִנָּחֵם) and the subsequent realization of that repentance (תַּעֲרַב-לִּי וְתִנָּחֵם) is depicted in the LXX as a plea for mercy (ἐλεως γενοῦ
ἐπὶ τῇ κακίᾳ τοῦ λαοῦ σου).
- d. verse 17: The LXX seeks to clarify the nature of the noise of the people (MT: תַּעֲרַב) by defining it in terms of κραζόντων.
- e. verse 18: The idea of "answering" or "singing" (תַּעֲרַב) in the MT is replaced in the LXX by that of "beginning" (ἐξαρχόντων). The Greek reference is not an altogether clear one although there may be an allusion in it to one who leads the singing of others, a chorus.⁶⁹
- f. verse 20: The pieces into which the golden calf is ground are descriptively portrayed as "very small" (λεπτόν).
- g. verse 22: The nature of the people's "bent on evil" (MT) is depicted as an "impulsiveness," (LXX), a readiness to rapidly move

⁶⁹H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 9th ed., 1940), I, p. 588.

in another direction⁷⁰ (τὸ ὄρμημα).

- h. verse 25: The LXX understands the "loosing" of the people (לְנֶאֱמָר) in terms of scattering or reckless abandonment (δυσχεσκέδαστα).
- i. verse 25: The LXX views the ways Israel's enemies will look upon her in terms of "malignant joy"⁷¹ (ἐπίχαρμα).
- j. verse 26: The rather brief pointed call for commitment by Moses is made slightly more explicit with the inclusion of an imperative to clear up any possible ambiguity. The short form דַּי לַיהוָה אֵלַי (lit. "who to [for] YHWH to me!") is extended to τίς πρὸς Κύριον; ἴτω πρὸς με (lit. "Who to [for] the Lord, let him go [come] to me").

The Septuagint was generally acclaimed as the bible of the Alexandrian Jews and remained the authoritative Greek text until well beyond the apostolic age. Perhaps because of the Church's use of it in its controversy with Jewish antagonists, new Greek translations eventually emerged which knew a greater confidence from the synagogue.⁷² Yet even though the LXX fell into

⁷⁰Liddell and Scott, *ibid.*, II, p. 1253.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, I, p. 672.

⁷²Swete, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

disuse, it was never fully replaced by the other versions.

Theodotion

The Theodotionic "version" has generally been considered an independent translation of the Hebrew text which was undertaken by Theodotion, an Ebionite Christian of Ephesus at the end of the second century A.D.⁷³ The fact that it is not so much a "version" as an early revision of the LXX⁷⁴ does not detract from its value in the present survey. In his detailed study, The Theodotionic Revision of the Book of Exodus, Kevin O'Connell has demonstrated that the Theodotionic readings come from a careful revision of the Old Greek to a Hebrew text virtually identical with the present MT, that it was presupposed by Aquila and must have been written in the first century A.D. or earlier and therefore that Theodotion of Ephesus could not have been its author.⁷⁵ The evidence for this is not always clear but it is not within the scope of the present investigation to enter

⁷³See, e.g., F. Field, Origenis Hexaplorum: Quae Supersunt Sive Veterum Interpretum Graecorum in Totum Vetus Testamentum Fragmenta, I (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1964, orig. publ. in 1875), pp. xxxviii-xlii; Swete, op. cit., pp. 42ff.

⁷⁴B. J. Roberts, The Old Testament Texts and Versions (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1951), pp. 123-126.

⁷⁵K. G. O'Connell, The Theodotionic Revision of the Book of Exodus (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972).

into a detailed discussion of the date of Theodotion. This problem will concern us only insofar as we might observe Aquila's apparent utilization of Theodotion's recension in his own revision to the MT, or vice-versa, otherwise the reader is referred to O'Connell's aforementioned work.

1. For the most part, it is surmised that the vast amount of material in Theodotion is an accurate reflection of the MT. In compiling the Hexapla, one would expect Origen to note only the discrepancies and variant readings between the MT and the various Greek versions. Since the extant Theodotionic material covers just over six percent of the entire book of Exodus,⁷⁶ it is evident that the amount of agreement between the MT and Theodotion must have been considerable.⁷⁷ Fortunately, however, one is not left to mere conjectured agreement for there is evidence within the Hexapla that, whereas one encounters variant readings in several of the versions Theodotion remains close in its rendering to that of the MT:

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 8.

⁷⁷O'Connell estimates that Theodotionic readings that might represent Hebrew variants amount to less than two and one-half percent of the extant material, and most of these involve minor points! (K. G. O'Connell, *ibid.*, p. 292).

- a. verse 2: Theodotion retains the phrase "and your sons" (καὶ υἱῶν υἱῶν) which is present in the MT (בְּנֵי בְנֵי), though absent in the LXX.
- b. verse 4: The plural form "and they said" (וַיֹּאמְרוּ), though altered to a singular form in the LXX, "and he said" (καὶ εἶπεν), is retained by Theodotion as a plural (καὶ εἶπον).
- c. verse 6: Theodotion has replaced the participle of the LXX, "and having risen early" (καὶ ὀρθρίσας) with a corresponding finite verb, "and he rose early" (καὶ ὥρθησε) to reflect the MT more exactly. However, Theodotion cites a singular verb in contrast to the plural of the MT. This cannot be conceived as an attempt to minimize Aaron's guilt since the following verse in the text reflects the plural construction of the MT.
- d. verse 6: Theodotion changes the LXX's singular verb rendering "he set upon the altar" (ἀνέβιβασεν) to the plural, "and they offered" (καὶ ἤνεγκαν) to more accurately translate the MT's וַיִּנְחֹן.

Considered together (c) and (d) are interesting in that both correct the rendering of the LXX towards that of the MT. The fact that the singular verb is

changed in (d) indicates that its failure to be changed in (c) may have been a simple oversight.⁷⁸

- e. verse 8: The omission of "molten" (יָצוֹרֹת) in the LXX is replaced by Theodotion (χωρυευτόν).
- f. verse 9: Theodotion includes the entire verse omitted by the LXX, in a word-for-word exact equivalent: καὶ εἶπεν κύριος πρὸς Μωυσῆν· ἑώρακα τὸν λαὸν τοῦτον, καὶ ἰδοὺ λαὸς σκληροτράχηλός ἐστιν.
- g. verse 18: Two words which are present in the LXX, viz. "but" (ἀλλὰ) and "wine" (οἴνου), and which have no support in the Hebrew text are omitted by Theodotion.
- h. verse 18: The emphatic personal pronoun in the last participial phrase of the verse: "I hear" (שָׁמַעַתְּ יְיָ), is recaptured by Theodotion in his translation ἐγὼ εἰμι ἀκούων which represents an expansion of the LXX text with the word εἰμι, and is not a common Greek occurrence.⁷⁹
- i. verse 24: The omission of a pronoun following the verb "to throw" in the LXX (ἐρριψα) is supplied by Theodotion

⁷⁸Ibid., pp. 140-141.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 45.

(αὐτῶν), though this plural form does not reflect an accurate rendering of the singular suffix on וְכָל־שִׁנְיָו.

- j. verse 25: Theodotion replaces the LXX participle "and having seen" (καὶ ἰδὼν) with a finite aorist "and he saw" (καὶ εἶδεν) to reflect the Hebrew converted imperfect more exactly.
- k. verse 25: The LXX's translation of MT's וְ is καὶ and is replaced by Theodotion's rendering ὅτι. (O'Connell suggests the latter is a more exact equivalent.)⁸⁰
- l. verse 25: The αὐτοῦ of the LXX is substituted by αὐτοῦ in Theodotion to represent more accurately the third person, masculine, singular suffix on פָּרַעַה in the MT.
- m. verse 25: Theodotion changes the word used for "enemy" in the LXX (ἐπεναντίας) to ἀνθεστηκόσιν to better correspond with the Qal participle plural of קָוָה in the MT (i.e., בְּקִיָּהִם).⁸¹

2. In several instances, Theodotion retains the LXX's modification of the Hebrew text:

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 15.

⁸¹Ibid.

- a. verse 18: Theodotion reiterates the LXX's rather free rendering of "weakness" in the MT (πυλπ) with τροπή with its meaning of "routing."
 - b. verse 24: In supplying the pronoun "them" (αὐτά) which the LXX omits in its translation of "and I threw it" (καὶ ἔβαλον), Theodotion failed to accurately translate the third person singular suffix. This failure is a result of a dependence upon the LXX where the context suggests that it was the golden ornaments (plural) that were thrown into the fire. The context of the MT suggests gold per se (singular) was used in this way.
 - c. verse 25: The reading of the LXX, εὐχάρμια ("malignant joy") for the difficult Hebrew phrase לשמוע ("for a whispering") is retained by Theodotion who does not provide any explicit reflection of the preposition in the MT, and offers no further attempt at interpreting the enigmatic Hebrew word.
3. Theodotion expands the existing Hebrew text.
 - a. verse 18: The verb "to be" understood in the first two stichs of the MT is explicitly supplied in Theodotion.

- b. verse 18: For לִק in the MT, Theodotion has an expanded reading, "the sound of battle" (φωρῇ πολέμου) which is unknown in the other versions. It is presumably based on לִק in the previous verse and may reflect a scribal error.
4. Theodotion changes the words used by the LXX's translation.
- a. verse 1: Theodotion replaces the LXX's rendering of "assembled" (συνέστη) with the verb meaning "called an assembly" (ἐκκλησιάσθη).
- b. verse 6: The LXX's translation of "they offered" (לָבִי) is changed in Theodotion from ἀνέβιβασεν ("he set upon the altar") to ἤνεγκαν ("they brought/offered").
- c. verse 25: The word for "enemy" is changed from ὑπεραντίους in the LXX to ἀνθεστηκόσιν in Theodotion.
5. Other significant observations:
- a. verse 31: Although Theodotion regularly uses καὶ to represent -ו (MT), even when the LXX uses δε this verse represents the only time Theodotion uses δε in this

regard.⁸²

- b. In this study we were unable to detect any omissions from the MT made by Theodotion.
- c. There were no attempts made by Theodotion to interpret difficult material apart from adopting the interpretation of the LXX.

One might conclude that the survey endorses the belief that Theodotion is, in fact, a revision of the LXX towards a Hebrew text which we know to be similar to the present MT. Frequently it changes words and structures in the LXX to more accurately reflect the Hebrew rendering. Only rarely does it side with the LXX against the MT and then only when the former appears to make good sense of a dubious Hebrew text.

Aquila

A second "version" we shall now consider is that of Aquila which gained much support and respect from the synagogue.

A Jewish proselyte who had been converted to Judaism via Christianity, Aquila slavishly rendered a very literal translation of the Hebrew text for Greek-speaking Jews in about 130 A.D. The purpose of his translation appears to have been not so much to copy the Hebrew exactly as to set aside the interpretation of the LXX where it appeared to support the views of

⁸²Ibid., p. 179.

the Christian Church.⁸³ Nevertheless his fidelity to the scriptures was recognized by several early Church Fathers including Irenaeus, Origen and Jerome.

As with the Theodotionic material, only fragments of Aquila's work have survived and these are also preserved in Field's collection of remains of Origen's Hexapla. The great number of similarities exist between the text of Aquila and that of Theodotion which are independent of the LXX. Such agreements indicate a dependence of one version upon the other. O'Connell argues for the precedence of Theodotion and suggests that Aquila both knew and used Theodotion's recension as the basis of his own further revision of the MT.⁸⁴

1. Aquila's affinity with Theodotion.

- a. verse 1: Both versions have changed the LXX's verb "to assemble" (συνέστη) to another, "to call an assembly" (ἐκκλησιασθη).
- b. verse 4: The singular renderings "and he said" in the LXX (καὶ εἶπεν) is replaced in both Aquila and Theodotion to a plural, "and they said" (καὶ εἶπον) to more accurately reflect the MT (וַיֹּאמְרוּ). In this way some of

⁸³Swete, op. cit., p. 31.

⁸⁴K. G. O'Connell, The Theodotionic Revision of the Book of Exodus, op. cit., p. 252.

the blame for the people's sin accruing to Aaron on the basis of the LXX's translation is removed.

- c. verse 6: Both versions reflect the finite verb of the MT, "and they rose up early" (וַיָּקֻמוּ) by utilizing a finite construction "and he rose up early" (καὶ ὤρθρυσεν) as over against the LXX's use of a participle (καὶ ὀρθρίζας). Both render a singular verb in contrast to the plural in the MT, despite the fact that the LXX represents a plural construction.
- d. verse 8: Aquila, like Theodotion, supplies "molten" (χωνευσεως) which is omitted in the LXX, and so remains faithful to the MT.
- e. verse 18: Like Theodotion, Aquila makes explicit the verb "it is" (ἐστὶ), in the second stich of the poem which is implied both in the LXX and the MT.
- f. verse 24: Both versions supply the pronoun "them" (αὐτά) omitted in the LXX, yet reflect the plural context of the LXX vis-a-vis the singular context of the MT.⁸⁵
- g. verse 25: Although Aquila's rendering of this verse is often different from that of

⁸⁵See note II, 2, c. above.

Theodotion, he agrees with him against the LXX on "he saw" (εἶδεν) (cf. LXX's ἰδών), on a second ὅτι in the verse to translate the Hebrew וַיֵּד (cf. LXX's καὶ), on a singular pronoun (αὐτόν) to replace the LXX's plural αὐτοὺς and on the use of the word ἀνθεστηκόσιν in place of the LXX's rendering of "enemy" (ὑπεναντίοις).

Not all of these examples of affinity between Aquila and Theodotion illustrate dependence, several of them show a rejection of the rendering of the LXX in order to more accurately reflect the Hebrew text as we know it in the present MT. The desire to revise the LXX in the direction of the MT is evident in both Aquila and Theodotion, each was concerned to produce a more exact translation of the Hebrew scriptures--indicative of the high esteem in which those scriptures were held. (Indeed, it may be that only the claim of inspiration for the LXX enabled it to survive replacement by these later versions.) This attempt, then, on the part of both Aquila and Theodotion to get back to an original Hebrew rendering independently may explain many of the similarities in the texts as being coincidental. However, some of the above examples of affinities are difficult to explain thus, these more significant citations include (a) and (f) and to some degree (c) and (e).

2. Disagreements between Aquila and Theodotion.

- a. verse 6: While Theodotion employs a different verb, "they offered" (ἤνεγκαν), from that of the LXX (ἤνεβιβασεν), Aquila apparently uses the plural form of the LXX verb since the Greek verb ἤνεβιβασεν is a more literal translation of the MT verb פָּלַט in the Hiphil stem.⁸⁶
- b. verse 9: Aquila utilizes a more abbreviated form than Theodotion of "it is a stiff-necked people": λαὸς σκληροτέρων ἐστ(ιν) for the slightly longer Theodotionic form of σκληροτράχηλός. The meaning in both cases is the same.
- c. verse 18: Aquila retains the unsupported "but" (ἀλλὰ) of the LXX against Theodotion and fails to reflect the unsupported "battle" (πολέμου) which we have presumed was based on the previous verse. This latter phenomenon is not surprising since the MT gives no justification for its existence. The retention of ἀλλὰ, however, is more enigmatic. It is possible to suppose that Aquila knew the LXX rather than Theodotion's revision.
- d. verse 18: Although in general, Aquila agrees with Theodotion on the use of

⁸⁶O'Connell, op. cit., p. 271.

ἐγὼ εἰμι to represent אני,⁸⁷

this is the only occasion when the revision is found in Theodotion but not in Aquila.

Its omission here could possibly be the result of a scribal error.

- e. verse 18: The meaning of תוֹלְדוֹ in this verse is enigmatic. The LXX translates it ἐξάρχοντων ("those who begin/lead"). Theodotion follows this translation but Aquila has changed the verb to καταλέγειν ("to recount, recite, repeat, tell at length and in order"), a verb which he uses on four other occasions to translate אָנָּה which is usually taken to mean "to answer."
- f. verse 25: In seeking to translate the MT, אֲנִי אֶפְרָסֵף is treated by both LXX and Theodotion in terms of the verb "to scatter, disperse" (διασκεδάσειν, cf. Theodotion's (διασκεδασμένος ἐστίν)).⁸⁸ Aquila, however, changes the verb to ἀποπετάσειν and renders a periphrastic construction "it spreading out" (ἀποπετασμένος αὐτός) to better reproduce the Hebrew. Presumably Aquila judged

⁸⁷See Exod. 3:11; 4:23; and 8:25 (LXX, v. 29).

⁸⁸The Greek verb ἐστίν is a perfectly acceptable equivalent for the Hebrew pronoun used predicatively.

this verb a more accurate translation of the Hebrew עָרַב.

- g. verse 25: Despite the fact that Theodotion retains the LXX rendering, "joy, derision" (ἐπίχαρμα), Aquila radically alters the sense of their translations. His somewhat strange rendering "to a filthy name" (εἰς ὄνομα βύπτου) may be an effort to paraphrase an obscure Hebrew term, or it might reflect a corruption such as תִּנְשׁוּ דָבָר.⁸⁹ At any rate, Aquila has reflected the use of the Hebrew preposition -ל which is not the case in Theodotion and the LXX.

These findings are far from conclusive in demonstrating dependence of one text upon another. Indeed, O'Connell recognizes the difficulties some of the above examples give to his thesis of the precedence of the Theodotionic material for in a number of cases (especially [a] and [c]) the material would suggest that Aquila worked with the LXX independently of Theodotion's revision. However one would obviously need to study the entire body of material in Exodus to come to anything but a tentative observation on the relationship between the two versions. A study of the Greek translations of Exodus 32 illustrates that the matter is not

⁸⁹See O'Connell's discussion, p. 15.

straightforward.

In comparing Aquila's version with that of Theodotion there are several phenomena that one has been able to observe and learn. We have noted Aquila's very literal renderings of the Hebrew text, often agreeing with Theodotion when it was felt that the latter revision moved in a direction of correcting the LXX towards the MT. Rarely does Aquila overstep the boundaries of his strict attention to the MT by expanding the Hebrew text. Indeed, on only one occasion does he supply the verb "to be" in verse 18, and even here he is simply making explicit in the Greek text what is implicit in the Hebrew. No omissions are made in Aquila's translation of the Hebrew text and even Theodotion is "corrected" if it is felt that the MT can be approximated to an even greater degree. It is in this context that Aquila's rendering of נִתַּן זֶרַע (verse 25) appears odd for it is the instance when one could possibly postulate that Aquila is making an attempt at interpretation and, by so doing, is departing from a strict adherence to the text.

3. Other significant observations in Aquila:

- a. verse 13: Aquila replaces the phrase "I will give to your seed" (δωσω τῷ σπέρματι ὑμῶν) which is partially omitted and partially changed in the LXX to read "to give them" (δοῦναι αὐτοῖς) to better reflect the MT

renderings, אתן לזרעכם.

- b. verse 18: Aquila introduces a Greek preposition ἀπὸ where neither the LXX nor the MT text has one. Unless it is somehow intended to balance with κατ' in the previous stich, it is difficult to understand why it is included.

Symmachus

With the failure of both Theodotion and Aquila to gain a ready acceptance among non-Jewish readers, a new translation emerged around the turn of the third century A.D. which aimed at correcting this deficiency. Since the previous versions had presented a too literal translation of the Hebrew which did damage to the Greek idiom, Symmachus attempted to express the sense of the Hebrew in the current style of an elegant Greek rendering.⁹⁰

The tradition differs over whether Symmachus was an Ebionite or a Samaritan who became a proselyte to Judaism.⁹¹ At any rate, he must be considered more than a reviser of earlier versions, although as we shall see he made free use of them. Time and again he expresses his independence of other Greek versions and allows his own idiosyncracies to play a decisive role.

⁹⁰B. J. Roberts, op. cit., p. 126.

⁹¹Swete, op. cit., pp. 50-53.

Again, only fragments of his work are available.

1. Symmachus often agrees with the earlier versions:

- a. verse 6: Symmachus' rendering of "they offered" (ἀνῆγγκαν) is identical with that of Aquila's who had corrected the number of the LXX's verb to better reflect the MT.
- b. verse 8: Along with both Theodotion and Aquila, Symmachus has replaced "molten" in the Greek text to parallel the Hebrew.
- c. verse 9: Symmachus includes the entire content of verse 9 which the LXX had omitted, and does so in a way that reflects exactly the renderings of Theodotion and does not take into account the slight variant in Aquila.
- d. verse 18: Symmachus tends to copy some of the features common to the LXX and Aquila, but not Theodotion: for example, "but" (ἀλλὰ) in the third stich and the final phrase "I hear" (ἐγὼ ἀκοῶ). This observation is not very surprising, though it is interesting from the point of view that Symmachus rejects Theodotion's variants.
- e. verse 24: The pronoun, "them" (αὐτά) is replaced by the three later versions to

reflect the MT, though the plural context reflects that of the LXX.⁹²

- f. verse 25: Symmachus agrees with both Theodotion and Aquila in its rendering of "enemy" (ἄνθεσθηκόσιν) against the LXX.
- g. verse 25: Symmachus retains the use of γὰρ in the LXX against the change to ὅτι affected by Theodotion and Aquila.
- h. verse 25: Both Aquila and Symmachus agree (against the LXX and Theodotion) in reflecting MT -ל by εἰς.

It is evident from these examples that Symmachus worked from the texts of the LXX, Theodotion and Aquila which he had before him. Item (b) and (c) indicate a reliance upon the Theodotionic material while item (a) and (d) show a preference for the LXX's and Aquila's rendering. One might assume that Symmachus simply utilized the text which best suited his purposes.

2. Modifications made to existing material which illustrate fidelity to MT;

- a. verse 4: Symmachus expands the other Greek texts to emphasize the plural construction of the MT and to make clear the proclamation was made by the people to Moses and not vice-versa as the LXX implies.

⁹²See above.

b. verse 6: Only Symmachus replaces the LXX verb (καὶ ὁρθίσας) with a plural participle (ὁρθίσαντες δέ) to reflect the rendering of the MT. As a result his text is the only Greek one which reflects the plural number for both MT verbs in this verse.

3. Symmachus makes attempts at interpretation:

- a. verse 18: He seeks to clarify the meaning of the LXX's rendering "one who begins" (ἐξάρχοντων) by an emphasis upon leadership. He translates the enigmatic Hebrew word by "commander" (κελευόντων) which is in keeping with the context of the verse. Joshua had heard the noise of battle and Moses suggests this is not the case.
- b. verse 18: What Moses does hear, according to Symmachus, is the noise of "oppression" (κακώσεως), not that of wine (οίνου, LXX), or of recitation (καταλεγόντων, Aquila).
- c. Verse 25: The difficult phrase in the MT (נִתְּנָן מִן) is understood in the LXX and Theodotion⁹³ as "they were scattered" (διεσκέδασται, LXX) and in Aquila as "they had spread out" (ἀποπετασμένος).

⁹³O'Connell, op. cit., p. 40.

Both these translations represent an attempt to accurately render the meanings of the Hebrew. Symmachus, however, is more concerned to explain the nature of this

"loosening" or "scattering" and interprets the phrase in terms of the people being

"naked" or "defenseless" (γυμνωταί).

- d. The equally puzzling Hebrew phrase לְשֹׁמְרֵי ("to a whispering"?) is interpreted by

Symmachus to mean "for a bad name" (εἰς

κακωνυμίας which is somewhat reminiscent of Aquila's εἰς ὀνομὰ ρύπου.

The noun used by Symmachus is a hapax.⁹⁴

4. Symmachus has changed other words in the Greek texts:

- a. verse 18: Despite the common use of φωνή for the Hebrew קוֹל, Symmachus has twice replaced it with "shout" (βοή). This change is unusual especially since Symmachus resorts to the use of φωνήν in the third stich.

- b. verse 18: Symmachus has replaced the "according to strength" (κατ' ἰσχύ) which is used throughout the other versions by "courage/strength" (ἀνδρείαν).

- c. verse 25: There is no consistency in

⁹⁴Theodotion replaces the LXX participle with a finite aorist, see above.

Symmachus' translation of the Hebrew word וָרָח. Twice it occurs in this verse and once in Exod. 5:4 and Symmachus uses three different verbs to translate it.⁹⁵

Symmachus' introduction of a number of variants is a significant factor in our understanding of the nature of his version. We have come a considerable way from the LXX and both Theodotion and Aquila's desire to reflect the Hebrew text as faithfully and as literally as possible. With Symmachus we have moved in the direction of much greater interpretation and a less strict adherence to the literalness of the MT. This is not to imply a lack of fidelity to the MT, on the contrary, we have noticed a high regard for the Hebrew in reflecting it accurately when the other versions are unclear, but it is this high regard for the Jewish scriptures that compelled Symmachus to make it presentable for his non-Jewish contemporaries.

The Aramaic Versions

Originating in post-exilic times when Aramaic had replaced Hebrew in Palestine as the common language of the people, the Targumim emerged as the appropriate translation of the Jewish scriptures. The Targumim, however, were more than mere translations for they

⁹⁵ ἀποτρεπετε (ἀποστρεφετε) in Exod. 5:4; γεγυμνωται in Exod. 32:25a; and προεδωκεν in Exod. 32:25b.

contained more midrashic material in the form of stories, explanations and illustrations of the Hebrew text than exact verbatim equivalents. This was particularly true of the earlier Targumim.⁹⁶ Through subsequent revisions the amount of midrash was reduced and Targum Onkelos represents a later and simpler rendering of the Hebrew text. It is with this Targum that we will begin our survey of the Aramaic Versions.

Targum of Onkelos

An official Aramaic version of the Hebrew text, Targum Onkelos is presumably of Palestinian origin while containing evidence of Babylonian editing.⁹⁷ Its final form seems to have come about after the fourth century A.D. and prior to the seventh century, although it may be that the work is based on others as early as the third century A.D.⁹⁸ The identity of Onkelos himself is an enigma, some suggesting that he is identical with Aquila,⁹⁹ but since this idea is predominantly based upon the coincidence of the form of the name, we shall dismiss it. All that can be said is that of the person who was responsible for this translation little is known.

⁹⁶B. J. Roberts, op. cit., p. 199.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 204.

⁹⁸Ibid., pp. 205f.

⁹⁹Ibid., pp. 204f.

The translation itself represents a strict adherence to the Masoretic text and is a simple rendering of the Hebrew. Etheridge has pointed out that it is a reflection of "sound judgment and a correct theology."¹⁰⁰ As such Targum Onkelos is of value for the light that it sheds on the meaning of Hebrew words and phrases.

There are several grammatical features common to Targum Onkelos which occur in the translation of Exodus 32. The divine name is uniformly rendered יְיָ (e.g., verses 5, 7, 9, 11, 14, 16, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33, 35). This is the case even when the MT has אֱלֹהִים (verse 16 twice). No distinction is made in Onkelos between the differences in the MT of divine names. The accusative particle כִּי in the MT is always rendered in the Targum as כִּי despite its unusual Aramaic character. The adverbial phrase "before" (קִדְמָה) commonly occurs in place of the Hebrew expressions "to" and "unto" (לְ and לְכֵן) (e.g., verses 5, 29, 30, 31, 33) and on occasion finds its way into sections where the Hebrew does not warrant its inclusion (e.g., verse 9 and 10). It can also more directly parallel "face" (פָּנֵי) as it does in verse 11. Hence the phrase is a common rendering for several variations within the MT. Onkelos, too, seeks

¹⁰⁰Etheridge, The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan Ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch, I (London: Longman, Green, Longman & Roberts, 1862), p. 8.

to avoid anthropomorphism by ascribing action to God's אֱלֹהֵינוּ. In verse 13 it is no longer himself that God swears by but his אֱלֹהֵינוּ.

For the most part Targum Onkelos follows the narrative of the Hebrew text in Exodus 32 very closely with virtually a word-for-word equivalence. Even the rather odd trilogy in verse 13 of "Abraham, Isaac and Israel" (vs. Jacob) is retained by Onkelos. And the awkwardness of the phrase "you know the people that it is in evil" is perfectly reflected in the Targum. No verses or phrases in the MT are omitted. The more significant departures from the Hebrew include the following:

- a. verse 4: The construction of the calf appears to be conceived by Onkelos as being cast in a mold (וַיִּצְקֵהוּ יְתִיה בְּכִיפָא).¹⁰¹
- b. verse 10: The Targum interprets the strange request of YHWH to Moses that he be left alone (וַיִּנְיחָהּ לִי , MT) more specifically as an instruction to Moses that he resist praying to him (אִנּוּן בְּעוֹתֵךְ לֹא קִדְדֵי). Since Moses dis- regards the imperative and intercedes on

¹⁰¹Etheridge understands this phrase as "and he formed it with a graver" (op. cit., p. 419) as over against that of Childs (*Exodus: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library [London: SCM Press Ltd., 1974], p. 446). It may be that Etheridge was unduly influenced by the AV translation.

behalf of the people anyway, Onkelos makes more explicit the conscious provocation YHWH made by leaving himself open to persuasion.

- c. verse 12: Onkelos supplies "which you said (threatened)" (דַּלִּי לְתָא) near the end of the verse, an idea which may be implicit in the MT.
- d. verse 13: "Seed" (זֶרַע, MT) is changed to "sons" (בְּנֵי).
- e. verse 18: This poetic sequence is considerably altered in the Targum. The repetitive use of עַנְוֹת in the MT is replaced in Onkelos by three different concepts (heroes, weaklings and revelers):

לֹא קוֹל גִּיבּוֹרִין דְּנִצָּחִין בְּקִרְבָּא
וְאִף לֹא קוֹל חֲלָשִׁין דְּחַתְּבִין
קוֹל דְּחַחִיכִין

(lit. "Not the sound of heroes who are victorious in battle, and also not the sound of weaklings who are broken, the sound of those who make sport")

The meter of the first colon has also been altered, though it is retained elsewhere.

- f. verse 25: The enigmatic word "loosed" (פֶּרַע, MT) is translated by the equally difficult rendering of "emptied" (בִּטְיָל).
- g. verse 25: "Whispering" (or "derision") (לְשָׁחֲזָה) is interpreted in a manner

not unlike that of Aquila and Symmachus who also allude to Israel's name being disgraced.

Onkelos reads לאסבותהון שום
ביש לדריהון.

- h. verse 26: The brief cry of Moses, literally "Who for YHWH to me!" (כִּי לַיהוָה אֵלַי) is lengthened to read, "Whoever fears YHWH let him come to me" (כִּן דַּחֲלִיא
דִּינִי יִיתוֹן לוֹתִי).
- i. verse 29: The ordination (or consecration) formula, "Fill your hand" (חֲלֵאן
יְדֶכֶם) is rendered in the Targum "Present your hands . . . an offering before YHWH" (קַרְיֹב דִּכּוֹן... קוֹרְבָנָא קַדְם יוֹי). In some copies of Onkelos "your hands" is omitted altogether.
- j. verse 35: The problematic "they made" (עָשׂוּ MT) is repointed in the Targum as an iṣtap'el form to read "they had served" (אֲשַׁתַּעֲבִדוּ).

Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan

The designation "Jonathan" arose from an erroneous understanding of an Aramaic abbreviation for Targum Jerusalem (תַּרְגּוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַיִם) by which appellative it is also known.¹⁰² Pseudo-Jonathan is

¹⁰²Roberts, op. cit., p. 201.

practically a complete Targum to the Pentateuch and appears to consist of a mixture of an early version of Onkelos and of an older Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch. It is believed to have reached its final form in the seventh century A.D.¹⁰³

Although it has much in common with Targum Onkelos of a literal and grammatical nature, the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan is characterized by a great deal more Haggadah. This Haggadah which frequently includes legendary accretions which attempt to edify and explain the biblical narrative is derived from Jewish Rabbinical works which include the Mishnah and Talmudim. One can clearly perceive this to be the case in the account of the golden calf.

1. Major haggadic expansions in the text are as follows:

- a. verse 1a: The addition after the opening phrase to explain why the people approached Aaron of "when they saw that the time he had appointed to them had passed; and Satan had come and caused them to err, and perverted their hearts with pride."
- b. verse 1b: Suggestions are offered to account for Moses' delay and to intimate his believed demise--"he may have been consumed in the mountain by the fire which flameth

¹⁰³Roberts, *ibid.*, pp. 201-2.

from before the Lord . . . in his end."

- c. verse 3: "And their wives denied themselves to give their ornaments to their husbands" is added. If the appeal to divest themselves of jewelry was a ploy to halt the apostasy, it obviously did not succeed.
- d. verse 5a: To explain Aaron's deviant behaviour, the Targumist explains that "Aaron had seen Hur slain before him and was afraid."
- e. verse 5b: The feast to YHWH is described as being "of the sacrifice of the slain of these adversaries who have denied their Lord, and have changed the glory of the Shekinah of the Lord for this calf."
- f. verse 6: The Targum adds "with strange service."
- g. verse 7: Moses is instructed in the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan to descend "from the greatness of thine honour; for I have not given thee greatness except on account of Israel."
- h. verse 10: The simple instruction of YHWH to be left alone (MT) is enlarged into "cease from your prayer, and cry not for them before me."

- i. verse 11: Moses is described as being "shaken with fear."
- j. verse 17: The nature of the people's shouting is described as being "with joy before the calf."
- k. verse 18: The poetic sequence is modified and lengthened to read:

"It is not the voice of the strong who are
victorious in battle
nor the voice of the weak who are overcome
by their enemies in the fight
but the voice of them who serve with
strange service and who make
merriment before it."
- l. verse 19a: In the scene which confronted him, Moses not only viewed the calf, but "the instrument of music in the hands of the wicked who were dancing and bowing before it, and Satan among them dancing and leaping before the people."
- m. verse 19b: As Moses smashed the tables the Targumist adds that "the holy writing that was on them flew away and was carried into the air of the heavens, and he (Moses) cried and said, 'Wee upon the people who heard at Sinai from the mouth of the Holy One, Thou shalt not make to thyself an image, or figure or any likeness--and yet, at the end of forty days, make a useless molten calf!'"
- n. verse 20b: The Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan adds a purpose for causing the people to

drink the water: "for whoever had given thereto any trinket of gold, the sign of it came forth upon his nostrils."

- o. verse 22: The people are excused in their description as "the children of the Just; but evil concupiscence hath made them to err."
- p. verse 23: The possibility of Moses' demise in verse 1 is quoted here as an actuality, "(Moses) is consumed in the mountain by the flaming fire from before the Lord . . . in his end."
- q. verse 24: According to the Targumist, the emergence of the calf from the fire is caused by an external evil force: "and Satan entered into it."
- r. verse 25: The nakedness of the people is attributed to Aaron's stripping them of "the holy crown which was upon their head, inscribed and beautified with the great and glorious Name."
- s. verse 27a: This verse is considerably enlarged, first with the clarification that only certain persons were to be killed, "whoever has sacrificed to the idols of the Gentiles, let him be slain with the sword."
- t. verse 27b: The slaughter of the Levites is qualified with an injunction: "and with

prayer before the Lord that He will forgive you this sin, take vengeance upon the wicked workers of strange worship."

- u. verse 28: Of the people who perished in the Levitical onslaught, the Targumist is concerned to indicate that they were guilty of the apostasy, hence they were known because they "had the mark in their nostrils." (cf. verse 20.)
 - v. verse 31: An address to YHWH is added in the Targum of which no indication is given in the MT: "I supplicate of Thee, Thou Lord of all the world, before whom the darkness is as the light!"
 - w. verse 33: The moral issue of whether Moses' name could be blotted from the book is raised by the Targumist: "It is not right that I should blot out your name."
2. At times the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan seeks to fill in details in the text to locate an event and give it a specific context. The following are examples:
- a. verse 8: The command of YHWH alluded to in the MT is spelt out, as is the place where it was given: ". . . in Sinai (that) you shall not make to yourselves an image, or figure or any likeness."
 - b. verse 12: The specific mountains are named

in the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan as Tabor, Hermon, Sirion and Sinai.

- c. verse 19: Allusion is again made to the commandment of YHWH which had been violated in the apostasy: "Woe upon the people who heard at Sinai from the mouth of the Holy One, 'Thou shalt not make to thyself an image, or figure or any likeness . . .'"
 - d. verse 26: The gate by which Moses stood is designated as the "sanhedrin gate."
 - e. verse 27: The Levites are instructed to go throughout the camp "from the gate of the sanhedrin to the gate of the house of judgment."
 - f. verse 32: The book of YHWH is described as "the book of the just" in the midst of which Moses' name is inscribed.
3. Other significant expansions in the Targumic material include:
- a. verse 9: It is specifically "the pride of the people" which YHWH views with disdain.
 - b. verse 12: Care is taken by the Targumist to qualify the Egyptians with the adjective "remaining." Presumably he had in mind those who had not been destroyed at the Sea.
 - c. verse 20: Probably influenced by the Deuteronomic account of the golden calf (Deut. 9), the Targumist adds that it was the water

of the stream into which Moses threw the dust.

- d. verse 28: The Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan makes explicit the fact that the three thousand fell "by the slaughter of the sword."
 - e. verse 30: The Targum adds the phrase "and (I) will pray."
 - f. verse 31: The Targum adds the phrase "and (he) prayed."
 - g. verse 32: The enigma of the unfinished Hebrew expression "if thou wilt forgive . . ." is nullified by the Targumist who supplies the imperative "forgive" to complete the sense of the phrase.
4. Pseudo-Jonathan's agreement with Onkelos:
- a. Like Targum Onkelos, the adverbial phrase "before . . . (‏דַּבְּרָא) commonly occurs in the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan in place of the Hebrew expressions "to" and "unto" (‏לְ and ‏לְכֹן) (e.g., verses 5, 29, 30, 31 and 33). The latter also follows the use made of it by Onkelos in verses 9, 10 and 11 where the Hebrew doesn't warrant its inclusion.
 - b. verse 8: Both Targumim adopt the use of the verb "to teach" (‏דַּבְּרָא) in place of the MT's "to command" (‏צִוָּה).

- c. verse 10: The Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan reflects Targum Onkelos' understanding of YHWH's command to Moses that he be left alone. Both Targumim intimate that YHWH asked Moses to "cease from your prayer. . . ."
- d. verse 13: The Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan retains the odd trilogy of the MT and evident in Targum Onkelos: Abraham, Isaac and Israel.
- e. verse 13: Along with Targum Onkelos, anthropomorphisms are avoided and God carried out overt action by means of his דברו. Here YHWH swears by his "Word."
- f. verse 13: In place of "seed" (MT), both Targumim translate "sons."
- g. verse 16: No distinction is made in either Targum in the different divine names of the MT. Elohim is here translated אלה in uniformity with the rest of the chapter.
- h. verse 18: Clearly in the first two cola of this poetic piece there is much in common between the Targumim. Both contain the idea of "the sound of heroes who are victorious in battle not the sound of weaklings who are overcome. . . ." The Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan further elucidates upon the rendering of Targum Onkelos with some additions

in the last two cola, but in essence there appears to be a common nucleus.

- i. verse 25: The reference to Israel's obtaining "an evil name in their generations" is an alternative reading by both Targumim of the enigmatic MT's "to the derision of their enemies" (לְשׁוֹן רִיבָה לְעֵמֵיהֶם).
 - j. verse 26: The Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan follows the more lengthy translation of Targum Onkelos, "Whoever fears YHWH let him come to me."
 - k. verse 35: The verb "they made" (וַיַּעֲשׂוּ) in the MT is replaced by "they worshipped" in both Targumim.
5. Changes in the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan from the MT and Targum Onkelos:
- a. verse 4: The proclamation is attributed to Aaron instead of to the people.¹⁰⁴
 - b. verse 6: The phrase "and brought peace offerings" is omitted in the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan.
 - c. verse 24: It is "the likeness of this calf" which emerges from Aaron's fire in the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan.
 - d. verse 29: No indication is given in the

¹⁰⁴This is particularly interesting in view of the fact that the proclamation is attributed to the people in verse 8.

Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan of any ordination formula. Instead, the filling of hands is conceived as an act of atonement to YHWH because of the slaughter the Levites had meted out. "Offer your oblation for the shedding of the blood that is upon your hands, and make atonement for yourselves before the Lord because you have smitten a man his son or his brother. . . ."

- e. verse 35: It is the רד'ד of YHWH which sends the plague and not YHWH per se.

The Jerusalem Targum

The Jerusalem Targum II and III is also known as the Fragmentary Targum. It is probably more ancient than the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan, evidenced by the simpler and shorter renderings of the Fragmentary Targum. The similarity between the Targumim would indicate that Pseudo-Jonathan used the Jerusalem Targum II and III as a source to which it added. Whether or not this Fragmentary Targum is originally independent or consists of only variants and marginal glosses of another Targum, perhaps an early version of Onkelos or Pseudo-Jonathan, remains in doubt. In language this Targum is similar to the Palestinian Talmud and Midrashim yet the Halakhah which it contains may reflect a Halakhic viewpoint going back to the first century A.D.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵Roberts, op. cit., pp. 202-204.

Only a few verses of the narrative of the golden calf survive in this collection.

- a. verse 5: The translation is similar to that of Pseudo-Jonathan: "And Aaron saw Hur slain before him, and was afraid; and he built an altar before him, and Aaron cried and said, 'A feast.'" Plainly the Fragmentary Targum has utilized the same haggadic material. Significantly, the designation of the feast to YHWH is omitted.
- b. verse 6: This is identical with the material in the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan with the reference to "strange service."
- c. verse 17: The Fragmentary Targum notes that Joshua heard the people committing evil
(קלחון דעדה דבעשין).
- d. verse 18: The third colon of the poetic stanza does not have the extensive rendering of Pseudo-Jonathan, and simply reads: "The voice of them who praise in strange service."
- e. verse 25: Again the similarity with the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan is to be noticed wherein use is made of common haggadic material. Nevertheless no mention is made of Aaron's stripping them. Pseudo-Jonathan probably included this later in keeping with the biblical tradition. Also, the Fragmentary Targum indicates the origin of the

phenomenon of the holy crown as being at Mount Horeb: "And Moses saw the people that they were uncovered; for they had been stripped of the golden crown which was upon their head, whereon the Name had been engraven and set forth, at Mount Horeb."

Targum Neofiti

Yet another Palestinian Targum has come to light with the interesting discovery made by Alejandro Diez Macho just over two decades ago.¹⁰⁶ Targum Neofiti is a complete Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch which is believed to be considerably older than either Onkelos or Pseudo-Jonathan. Rabbi Kasher has dated it 200 years older than the earliest date given by some scholars for Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. He has suggested that much of the material it contains goes back to Ezra the scribe in the early days of the Second Temple and served as a source for the Mishnah and the halakhic Midrashim of the Tannaim.¹⁰⁷ It also contains material of a much later time such that a date of the second century A.D. has been suggested for the final form of Neophiti. However, this date must be a tentative one because this Targum

¹⁰⁶ Alejandro Diez Macho, Ms. Neophyti 1, 3 vols.+ (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, (1968).

¹⁰⁷ Cited in Diez Macho, *ibid.*, p. 70.

circulated in different forms in Palestine and lacked a definitive form.

On the whole, the Aramaic translation reflects the MT quite accurately. In places the Hebrew text is retained without an interpretation to accommodate the Mishnaic instruction that the section was to be read but not translated.¹⁰⁸ Neofiti has imbibed a considerable amount of Haggadah but not to the extent that Pseudo-Jonathan has. Indeed, Neofiti appears to steer a via media between Onkelos and Pseudo-Jonathan. There are similarities with each but enough evidence to convince one that Targum Neofiti is an independent and prior work.

1. Similarities with the other Targumim:

- a. The expression "before the Lord" is a common one in all the Targumim (verses 5, 9, 10, 11, 14, 16, 29, 30, 31).
- b. The addition of the phrase "in the end" at the end of verses 1 and 23 is common to both Neophiti and Pseudo-Jonathan.
- c. verse 6: The revelry which accompanied the apostasy (MT) is conceived of by the Jerusalem Targumim I, II and III as well as Targum Neofiti in terms of "sporting in foreign worship." The idea that this was foreign worship is nowhere intimated in the

¹⁰⁸ Meg. 25a, 25b (cf. verses 1, 4, 8, 19, 20, 23, 24, 31 and 35).

Hebrew.

- d. verse 9: Neofiti adopts the targumic paraphrase ". . . is manifest before me," observable in the other Targumim, for "I see."
- e. verse 10: Moses is restrained from praying to YHWH: "refrain yourself from beseeching mercy for them before me." The brief desire expressed by the MT to be left alone is replaced by both Neofiti and Pseudo-Jonathan.
- f. verse 13: The trilogy of Abraham, Isaac and Israel (MT) is retained by all the Targumim.
- g. verse 13: The concept of YHWH's swearing by "his Word" or "the name of his Word" is present in each Targum we have studied.
- h. verse 13. Like the others, Targum Neofiti replaces "seed" (MT) with "sons."
- i. verse 18: The poetic sequence has several similar ties in the Targumim. The sense of what is being expressed is the same in each case and much of the language used by the Targumim is identical. Neofiti renders it:

It is not the voice of men victorious in
 battle I hear
 Nor is it the voice of the feeble, defeated
 in battle I hear. . . .
- j. verse 18: The rendering of the third colon by Neofiti is remarkably similar to that of the Jerusalem Targumim. The reference again is to foreign worship (cf. v.6) and the

concept of "praise" is identical to that used in the Fragmentary Targum.

- k. verse 25: Neofiti reflects the haggadic tradition also found in the Jerusalem Targumim where the people were said to be stripped "because they had stripped off the crown of gold that had been on their heads, upon which the Distinguished Name was engraved."
 - l. verse 25b: Neofiti's reference to the people's acquiring "an evil name for themselves for all generations" is similar to that of both Onkelos and Pseudo-Jonathan.
 - m. verse 26: Like the other Targumim, Targum Neofiti reads, "Let anyone who fears YHWH, come to me!"
2. Differences from the other Targumim:
- a. verse 5a: Although a Haggadah concerning Hur is also related by the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan, Targum Neofiti has an interesting variation to it: "And Aaron saw Hur the prophet before it and was afraid." Some texts read: "And Aaron saw Hur sacrificing before it." Either way, the idea is not that of Hur's being slain.
 - b. verse 5b: Some variant readings to Neofiti render "and Aaron made announcement and said: Would that the sacrifice be against

him as the feast of the wicked before the Lord tomorrow."

- c. verse 6: Targum Neofiti adds to offered holocausts "in order beside them." The word may be due to dittography and should be omitted.¹⁰⁹
- d. verse 10: God's offer to make of Moses a great nation is lengthened to read: "it is possible before me to constitute you a people greater and stronger than they."
- e. verse 12a: Neofiti reads: "For their evil has been their coming out."
- f. verse 12b: Neofiti adds "which you have planned to bring upon" in place of "threatened" in the text of Onkelos and Pseudo-Jonathan (cf. v.14).
- g. verse 13: Targum Neofiti adds "in your good mercies."
- h. verse 16: Targum Neofiti replaces "God" (MT) or "Lord" (Targumim) with "the Power from before the Lord" and "clearly expressed from before the Lord." Some variant texts render the first phrase more anthropomorphically, "the finger of the Power."
- i. verse 17: The noise of the people is understood in Neofiti as resulting from their

¹⁰⁹Diez Macho, II, p. 504, n. 8.

"running to and fro."

- j. verse 18: The recurring phrase in Neofiti, "I hear" appears at the end of each colon in the poetic sequence. The final colon is also repeated in an abbreviated form: "the voice of those who praise in a foreign worship I hear; the voice of those who praise."
- k. verse 24: Neofiti changes the sense of the sentence from first to third person, perhaps, as Diez Macho suggests,¹¹⁰ from respect for Aaron. The reference to another person could reasonably be to Hur. The text reads: "And he said to them: Whoever of you has gold, take it off and give it to him."
- l. verse 25: According to Targum Neofiti it is not Aaron who strips the people but they who do it themselves. Further Aaron is not only free from implication in the sin but explicitly exonerated, the reason for their shame who "because they did not listen to the words of Aaron."
- m. verse 29: Targum Neofiti's understanding of "Fill your hand" (MT) is "complete the offering of your hands."
- n. verse 30: Neofiti adds "and I shall beseech mercy from before the Lord."

¹¹⁰Diez Macho, II, p. 506.

- o. verse 32: Neofiti describes the book as "the book of your Law" as opposed to Pseudo-Jonathan's "book of the just."
 - p. verse 34: The concept of YHWH's visiting is understood in terms of remembering.
3. Other differences from the MT:
- a. verse 4: Targum Neofiti claims that the people made the calf and not Aaron in its use of the third person plural verb, "they made."
 - b. verse 7: Targum Neofiti omits the possessive pronoun, "your."
 - c. verse 11: Targum Neofiti adds the descriptive adjective "redeemed."
 - d. verse 11: The possessive pronouns, "your" is introduced twice.
 - e. verse 12: Targum Neofiti adds "I pray."
 - f. verse 14: The indication is that YHWH repented of "all the evil."
 - g. verse 15: Targum Neofiti omits "of the testimony."
 - h. verse 22: The expression "to Moses" is added to that of the MT.
 - i. verse 23: Targum Neofiti omits the word, "the man."
 - j. verse 32: Targum Neofiti adds the verb, "and remit."

We have in this section demonstrated that the story of the golden calf as witnessed to in the Targumim is essentially a paraphrase of the scriptural narrative. This appears to be particularly the case in the earlier versions where haggadic traditions give indication of the Sitze im Leben out of which they emerged. Perhaps of greatest fascination is the text of Neofiti which, as we have observed, attempts on several occasions to exonerate and honour Aaron. The blame for the apostasy rests squarely upon the shoulders of the people. Aaron, indeed, denounces the sin and makes an effort at reformation (vv. 5, 24, 25). In subsequent Targumim, excuse is continued to be found for Aaron's deviant behaviour. According to the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan it is fear for his life that prompts Aaron to act as he does (v.5) and even as he becomes involved, it is really Satan and not Aaron who is the creator of the image (v.24). Eventually as one approaches the more accurate account of Onkelos, the text is divested of earlier haggadic material and the apostasy of Israel's High Priest is perceived without defense in an era which took less offense against this crime of the Jews.

The Samaritan Pentateuch

By way of completeness it is important that we consider the text of the Samaritan Pentateuch and the light it sheds upon the MT. It is not really accurate to describe the Samaritan Pentateuch as a version since

it is not a translation from the Hebrew. In language and script it corresponds to the Hebrew Pentateuch as it existed when the Samaritan schism took place. It thus bears witness to one of the text forms of pre-Masoretic Hebrew in the fourth century B.C. and earlier.¹¹¹

As one might imagine, the Samaritan Pentateuch adheres strictly to the traditional text and as a result much of the Samaritan Pentateuch is identical with the MT (e.g., verses 1 and 2). Fortunately the Samaritan Pentateuch has suffered little corruption throughout its long history. Some of the discrepancies between it and the MT are as follows:

- a. verse 6: The MT verb וַיִּשְׁכַּחֲרוּ ("they rise early") is rendered וַיִּשְׁכַּחֲרוּ.
- b. verse 10: The Samaritan Pentateuch adds to the verse a portion from Deut. 9:20.
- c. verse 11a: The form of the verb, "it burns" changes from יִחַר to יִחַר.
- d. verse 11b: "And with a strong hand" (זְבִיחַ פְּתִיחַ) changes to "and with your outstretched arm" (זְבִיחַ עַל הַשֵּׁמֶן).
- e. verse 13: The more familiar trilogy of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is found in the Samaritan Pentateuch.
- f. verse 13: The Samaritan Pentateuch includes "greatly" (הַרְבֵּה) to "I will multiply."

¹¹¹Roberts, op. cit., pp. 188ff.

- g. verse 13: The pronoun "it" is supplied in the verb "they shall inherit/possess" (וְנַחֲלֶהָ).
- h. verse 18: The Samaritan Pentateuch renders the third עָוֹן as עוֹנוֹת ("sins").¹¹²
- i. verse 19a: The definite article in conjunction with "dancing" is supplied.
- j. verse 19b: The feminine adjectival form is used of the adverb תַּחַת (MT), i.e., בְּתַחַתִּית.
- k. verse 20: The pronominal suffix is supplied in the Samaritan text: וַיִּשְׂרֹףֶהָ ("and he burnt it").
- l. verse 22: The Samaritan Pentateuch renders בְּרָע ("in evil") as פָּרַע to possibly reflect the use of the word in verse 25.
- m. verse 25: The expression פָּרַע הָאֵל (MT) is written in plene form in the Samaritan text: פָּרוּעַ הָאֵל. (Similarly בְּקִדְיָהּ is written בְּקוֹדְיָהּ.)
- n. verse 25: The Samaritan Pentateuch reads לְשַׂחֲזָר in place of לְשַׂחֲזָה ("for a derision").
- o. verse 27: The waw conversive is supplied for עָבַר (MT, "pass over").

¹¹²It is noteworthy that the distinction between the first two עָוֹן (Qal, MT) and the third עוֹנוֹת (Piel, MT) is recognized by the Samaritan texts. Cf. B. K. Waltke's Prolegomena to the Samaritan Pentateuch (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1965), pp. 197-8.

- p. verse 29: The Samaritan Pentateuch renders the plural "your hands" (ידיכם).
- q. verse 30: The Samaritan Pentateuch does not have the final א in אפרח ("I will make atonement").
- r. verse 31: The Samaritan text replaces אני (MT, "I pray") with הנה ("behold").
- s. verse 32: The imperative סלח ("forgive") is present in the Samaritan text.
- t. verse 32: The interjection "I pray" (אני) is not found in the Samaritan text.¹¹³
- u. verse 35: The Samaritan Pentateuch reads "they worshipped" (עבדו).

¹¹³Cf. LXX.

CHAPTER II

EARLY CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH INTERPRETATION OF THE STORY OF THE GOLDEN CALF

The Golden Calf as Observed by The New Testament

The New Testament alludes directly to the incident of the golden calf on two occasions. The Book of Acts cites the speech of Stephen in which mention is made of the episode (Acts 7:38ff), and Paul refers to it in his writings to the Church at Corinth (1 Cor.10:7f). On each occasion the apostasy is roundly condemned.

The allusion of the apostle Paul to the sin of the golden calf is made in the context of a homiletical treatise. Paul's concern is not to condemn the Jews but to warn the Christian Church "not to desire evil as they did" (v 6). Indeed, the apostle addresses the ancient Israelites as one who identifies with them and calls them "our fathers" (v 1). Both communities are associated with one another, Israel was baptized into Moses (v 2), ate and drank the same supernatural food (vv 3,4) and was accompanied by Christ (v 4). Yet even possessing such privileges, the Israelites were not immune from sinning as Paul illustrates with reference to several incidents in their wilderness wanderings--the crossing, the manna and quail, the golden calf, the fiery serpents.

Thus the lesson is pressed home to the Christian community: "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (v 12). The apostasy was a warning to Israel, but for the Church these things were recorded for its instruction (v 11). About the apostasy itself Paul says little. Quoting Exodus 32:6 verbatim from the LXX, he describes the Israelites as idolaters.

The Lucan account, by contrast, is much more detailed in its exposition of the sin of the golden calf. The occasion is Stephen's defence before the council of the synagogue in which he reviews the history of Israel from Abraham to the building of the Solomonic Temple. It is a tale of God's grace and Israel's distrust. Patriarchs and prophets were continually made the agents of YHWH's reconciliation to the nation, but Israel's history is carved out of misunderstanding and refusal of the divine overtures. Nowhere, according to Stephen, is this contrast between God's grace and man's stubbornness more clearly perceived than in the apostasy of the golden calf. Moses had just received the living oracles to give to the people when

...our fathers refused to obey him, but thrust him aside, and in their hearts they turned to Egypt, saying to Aaron, "Make for us gods to go before us; as for this Moses who led us out from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him" (vv 39,40).

The people then turned their attention to constructing the calf and offering sacrifices to it (v 41). The picture is completed by Stephen with the reference to the

joy which the apostates took in their work (v 41). But their sin is further compounded as Israel's attention is drawn to a worship of astral bodies, "the host of the heaven" (v 42), and they "took up the tent of Moloch and the star of the god Rephan."¹

Stephen builds up to a climactic denunciation of Israel as he concludes his defence:

You stiff-necked people, uncircumcized in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered....²

Stephen's intention in using the apostasy of the golden calf is considerably different from that of Paul. It is evident that Paul utilizes it as a homiletical device, an illustration to the Church that sin is always stalking at their door. Stephen, on the other hand, is attempting to remind his Jewish listeners of the crimes of their past and, in prophetic tradition, to accuse them of being no better than their fathers. Curiously, one notices that, as with Paul, Stephen identifies himself with his audience. His historical resumé is couched in phraseology similar to Paul's, he refers to ancient Israel as "our

¹Stephen quotes from Amos 5:25-27. Cf also II Kings 17:16-17 where a similar reference is made to Israel's worship of molten calves, astral bodies and Ba'al.

²Acts 7:51-52.

fathers." Yet when it comes to his final denunciation, Stephen dissociates himself from the Jews and the terminology "our fathers" gives way to "your fathers." It is they who have duplicated the folly of their ancestors. And the crucifixion of Jesus was the natural outcome of an existence lived in constant opposition to God.

The apostasy itself is depicted in terms of open rebellion against Moses (v 39). It is an act of blatant disobedience. No excuse is sought for the nation. Interestingly the inner motivation for the act is given by the New Testament writer: "in their hearts they turned to Egypt" (v 39b).³ Such a motivation may signify the whole attitude (or mind set) of the people in wanting not merely an Egyptian deity but a return to the security of the life-style of Egypt and an escape from the difficult life of faith to which YHWH had called them. Despite the servitude under which they laboured in Egypt, there they had no anxiety about a food supply nor need of guidance for the direction they must take.

Stephen's defence before the synagogue is depicted as a prophetic note to a wayward generation. It

³Despite the fact that nowhere does Ezekiel explicitly mention the sin of the golden calf, it is probable in chapter 20:13 ff. that allusion is made to it. If this is so, the inner motivation is perceived as a turning in their hearts to idols (v 16) and since idolatry was earlier associated with Egypt (v 8), a case could be made that Stephen was influenced by the exilic prophet and hence the calf was perceived as an Egyptian symbol of deity. However, the dependence of the Lucan account upon Ezekiel is tenuous and, in the opinion of the present investigator, must remain inconclusive.

is, so to speak, an oracle in the tradition of the prophetic movement in Israel. Although a Christian, Stephen is seen in the continuity of Old Testament faith. The ties between Christian and Jew are still close. But already within his speech lie the seeds of what would later form the major thrust of a tirade against the Jewish community by a Christian Church whose perspective had shifted from that of the New Testament ecclesia. It is this to which we shall now turn our attention.

The Polemic of the Golden Calf
During the Patristic Era

As the story of the golden calf was incorporated into the Church's anti-Jewish polemic, it became the sine qua non of the condemnation made by the Church, and elicited a strained apologetic literature from the Jewish community as we shall later discover. The guilt of their forefathers was a discomfort to the Jews and their high priest Aaron's participation in the shame was an additional dismay. So much so that Smolar and Aberbach have observed that "Of all the sins committed by the Israelites in the wilderness, none proved to be so embarrassing to later generations as the making of the golden calf."⁴

⁴Smolar and M. Aberbach, "The Golden Calf Episode in Postbiblical Literature," Hebrew Union College Annual, XXXIX (1968), 91. E.g. many Christians had died at the hands of Bar Kochba in the early second century A.D., Justin Martyr, First Apology, 31.

The basic elements in Stephen's speech had undoubtedly influenced the later thinking of the Church Fathers. The apostasy of the golden calf had marked the fountainhead of Israel's crimes which pervaded their entire history culminating in the death of Jesus Christ. The story of the nation was punctuated with idolatry, disbelief and stiff-neckedness. They had refused to heed YHWH's prophets, and those who proclaimed the advent of the Christ they murdered. And still the atrocities of the Jews continued in their persecution of the Church. The result was that Christians were no longer sympathetic to the Jewish cause. They were convinced that the Jews had lost all claim to the covenant promises of God.⁵

The effect of this was to convince the Church that the new covenant purchased by the blood of Jesus

⁵The Epistle of Barnabas asserts that the covenant of YHWH had been broken as Moses hurled the tables to the ground. Israel had abrogated its peculiar relationship with its God. The golden calf marked the end of an era, the nation had lost its chosenness along with the heritage promised to Jacob. The covenant relationship henceforth became the prerogative of the church. Epistle of Barnabas, 4:6ff; 14:4. Cyprian affirmed that the Jews had incurred God's heavy wrath (Cyprian, Testimonies Against the Jews, Bk 1, 1) and this, added Tertullian, had led to a divorce between Israel and the grace of God (Tertullian, An Answer to the Jews, chap 1). The privilege of sonship status now reverberated to the Christian community. In Origen's words this was that foolish nation which God raised up to anger the Old Covenant people as God himself had been angered (Origen, De Principiis, Bk IV, chap 1 & 4).

Christ had totally superseded the covenant established at Sinai. The Christians had now replaced the Jews as the new people of a covenant from which the Jews had been excluded.

The condemnation of the Jews by the Christians was vigorous. They were depicted in the sin of the golden calf as a foolish people,⁶ lustful,⁷ immoral, stubborn, exhibiting base ingratitude and impatience.⁸ They were accused of fornicating with pagan women⁹ and of worshipping the stars and sacrificing their children to Moloch.¹⁰ But perhaps one of the greatest denunciations made by the Church Fathers concerned Israel's rank unbelief. Origen, in particular, was adamant in his belief that the Jews by nature were unbelievers. Despite all the wonders revealed to them in Egypt, at the Sea, in the pillar of fire and cloud of light and with the Decalogue, the Israelites received them with incredulity:

for had they believed what they saw and heard, they would not have fashioned the calf, nor changed their own glory into the likeness of a grass-eating calf; nor would they have said

⁶Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, 20.

⁷Cyprian, Testimonies Against the Jews, Bk 111, 60; Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, 3.

⁸Tertullian, Of Patience, chap 5.

⁹Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, 132, 1.

¹⁰Ibid., 19, 5 and 132, 1.

to one another with reference to the calf,
 "These be thy gods, O Israel, who brought
 thee up out of the land of Egypt."¹¹

The greatest indictment which the Fathers levelled against the Jewish community related to this historic propensity for unbelief which the latter appeared to exhibit. The apostasy of the golden calf only marked the inauguration of Israel's crimes which continued throughout the nation's history. The end result was the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus.¹²

In agreement with St. Stephen's earlier defence, the Church Fathers perceived that the Jews' historic bent toward evil would naturally imply a refusal to be convinced of the coming of Jesus. They had persecuted the Old Testament prophets and had murdered those who had proclaimed the advent of Christ.¹³ Therefore nothing short of the killing of Jesus could reasonably be expected from them. They even continued their evil ways by their persecution of the Church.¹⁴

The gravity of Israel's great sin was emphasized not only to the detriment of the Jews but also for the

¹¹Origen, Against Celsus, Book 11, chap 74 transl. by F. Crombie, The Writings of Origen, 11 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1872), p. 77.

¹²Cf. Origen, Against Celsus, Bk 11, chap 74; op. cit., pp. 77-78.

¹³Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, 73, 6; Lactantius, Divine Institutes, 4, 11; cf. Acts 7:52.

¹⁴Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, 133.

instruction and edification of the Church. In the same manner in which St. Paul had utilized the text of Exodus 32, so did several of the patristic writers. Irenaeus quotes directly from the apostle's first epistle to the Corinthians to underline Paul's thesis that the story was recorded not for the sake of those who had sinned but for the instruction of the Church because God was the same then as now.¹⁵

In contrast to the straightforward attempts to understand the narrative of the golden calf as an instruction for the Church or as an indictment upon the Jews, Augustine sought to penetrate beyond the plain meaning of the text to a deeper or hidden meaning of the material. His resulting allegorical treatment of the account was clearly subjective and even lacked logical consistency.¹⁶ The result was to abstract hermeneutics from objective criteria and controls which make for

¹⁵Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Bk 4, chap 27, 3.

¹⁶Cf. Augustine, Exposition on the Book of the Psalms, Ps. 35:26; also Ps. 74:13; transl. by A. C. Coxe (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1956), pp. 346-7. The implications for homiletical use were straightforward, Christians were to refrain from lust of food (Cyprian, Testimonies Against the Jews, Bk 111, 60), immoral behaviour, impatience (Tertullian, Of Patience, 5) and all that would bring discredit upon God in Christ. Tertullian encouraged the Church not only to mortify the desire for gold and ornaments, but entreated them to positively hate gold and array themselves in simplicity. Tertullian, On Female Dress, Bk 11, chap 13; ed. by A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, The Writings of Tertullian, 1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1869), p. 332. Cf. Clement of Alexandria, The Educator, Bk II, chap 12.

normative exegesis. But a significant off-shoot of Augustine's doubtful interpretation was to make the story of the golden calf the cornerstone of the medieval identification of the Jews with the devil.¹⁷

Yet the Christian Church in these first centuries A.D. was not only zealous to dissociate itself from the Jewish community but to maintain continuity with the oracles of God revealed through the ages. This new community of faith did not arise in a vacuum, for its antecedents stretched back into the dawn of creation. In one sense Jesus Christ was the catalyst which enabled the Church to emerge from the Jewish community as the new people of God, but Christ was the climactic revelatory event in declaring the nature of YHWH, the God of Israel. Hence one finds St. Paul and St. Stephen referring to ancient Israel as "our fathers." Similarly Irenaeus and Tertullian were concerned that the discontinuity between the old and new Israel was not complete; they too were intent on addressing the ancient people in this intimate manner.¹⁸ The end result was to regard the early Israelites in this period of our study as "the Church in the wilderness."¹⁹

¹⁷Smolar & Aberbach, op. cit., p. 101; see also J. Trachtenberg, The Devil and the Jews (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943), pp. 11-31.

¹⁸Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Bk 4, chap 27, 3; Tertullian, On Female Dress, Bk 11, chap 13.

¹⁹John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles, Homily XVII on Acts 7:35.

Significantly, too, Moses was greatly praised for his role in stemming the chaos which had resulted in the people's apostasy.²⁰ He was depicted in glowing terms by Clement as a great instructor of the people²¹ and an intercessor par excellence.²² Moses' exemplary character was most clearly seen in his willingness to offer himself as a sacrifice along with his people for their sin.²³ "How great was his perfection," comments Clement, "in wishing to die together with the people, rather than be saved alone!"²⁴ Of greatest consequence, however, was the Fathers' equation of Moses with Christ. The law-giver was conceived of in typological terms as a prefiguration of Christ. In particular this incident of Moses' intercession in which he places his own life on the line is singled out as directly parallel to Christ's sacrificial self-emptying (ἐκυτὸν ἐκένωσεν, Phil. 2:7) and death:

²⁰It is of interest in this regard that the Fathers do not appear either to condemn or to exonerate Aaron. The present investigator has found no reference of note to the role Israel's high priest played in the sin of the golden calf.

²¹In reality, argues Clement, YHWH is the teacher but he has taught Moses to act as an instructor. The instruction is from God but Moses is the vehicle of God's communication to Israel.

²²Clement, The Instructor, Bk 1, chap 7.

²³Exod. 32:32.

²⁴Clement, The Miscellanies, Bk IV, chap 19; trans. by W. Wilson, The Writings of Clement of Alexandria, 11 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1869), p. 194.

Most assuredly a good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep, according to the word of Moses, when the Lord Christ had not as yet been revealed, but was already shadowed forth in himself: "If you destroy this people," he says, "destroy me also along with it."²⁵

But this was by no means the only similarity between Moses and Jesus Christ depicted by the Church Fathers. John Chrysostom regarded the rejection of Moses, his giving a law and delivering the people from bondage as analogical to events in the life of Jesus.²⁶ And in another interesting treatment of the subject by Bishop Archelaus the parallel is drawn so precisely that it results in a long and fascinating list of items depicting the highlights of Moses' life all of which find their counterpart in the New Testament's picture of Jesus. The rationale for this inventory with both Archelaus and Chrysostom appears to be a verse in Deuteronomy which reads: "The Lord God will raise up unto you a Prophet from among your brethren, like unto me..."²⁷ Pertinent to our own study of Exodus 32, Bishop Archelaus cites the affinity between Moses' destruction of the apostates in

²⁵Tertullian, De Fuga In Persecutione, 11, 1; transl ed. by A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, The Writings of Tertullian, 1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1869), p. 371; see also Tertullian, Against Marcion, Bk 11, 26.

²⁶John Chrysostom, loc. cit.

²⁷Deut. 18:5. Cf. Bishop Archelaus, The Disputation with the Heresiarch Manes, 44: transl. by S. D. F. Salmond, The Works of Gregory Thaumaturgus, Dionysius of Alexandria and Archelaus (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1871), p. 379.

verses 26 ff. and Christ's assertion that he had come to send a sword upon the earth and to set man at variance with his neighbour.²⁸

Such then, was the polemic of the Christian Church in the first few centuries A.D. This survey has shown that there was little concern to give any type of systematic exegesis of the narrative of the golden calf. Instead, the story was used as an opportunity to castigate the Jew and to learn from Israel's misfortune. Not only is one able to gain insight into patristic thought which is of interest in its own right but, as we continue, one becomes aware of the contribution they made on later understanding of the text. The patristic writings were reflections of the circumstances which prevailed at the time. The Church was concerned to establish traits of continuity with the community of the Old Covenant as well as traits of discontinuity, and their biases are clearly perceptible. The Christological understanding of the text, especially with regard to Moses, is always presupposed. In all, the Church Fathers speak with a single-minded solidarity in their denunciation of Israel's great sin.

²⁸Matt. 10: 34.

Rabbinic Interpretation
in the Talmudic Age

Broadly speaking classical Rabbinic literature falls into two types. The first is halakah which may be described as regulative material. It seeks to apply the Torah to everyday life. The second is known as haggadah which endeavors to illustrate the meaning of the scriptures, to inspire rather than to instruct. The Rabbis perceived their role as teachers and exegetes in order to discover the meaning of the text of scripture, to apply it to the life of the nation (halakah) and subsequently to encourage its acceptance with haggadic comment. The result was a corpus of material containing both halakah and haggadah which was compiled and attached to scripture known as midrash.²⁹

Strictly innovative midrashic material ended after the completion of the Babylonian Talmud in the sixth century A.D.,³⁰ and it will be this period that will concern us in the present section. After that time one encounters a period of assembling and consolidating of the material by the Geonim up to the rise of the Middle Ages commentators in the eleventh century. Midrashic literature can be conveniently separated into

²⁹J. Bowker, The Targums and Rabbinic Literature (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), pp. 40-46.

³⁰H. L. Strack, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1931), p. 203.

three categories: expository Midrashim, homiletical Midrashim and narrative Midrashim. Expository Midrashim are predominantly halakic in character consisting of numerous laws. The oldest type known is tannaitic midrashim comprising Mekhilta (which is a midrash on parts of Exodus, i.e., 12-23; 31:12-17 and 35:1-3), Sifra and Sifre. It grew up in the first two centuries A.D. Homiletical Midrashim are made up of sedarim (lectionaries), haftaroth (supplements to the Torah) and are numerous homilies including Pesiqta, Pesiqta Rabbati and Tanhuma. These tend to handle individual texts as the basis for their preaching. Finally narrative Midrashim represent a composite and later work and will not occupy our immediate attention.

The importance of outlining the different types of Rabbinic literature will become clearer as we proceed, for it is necessary that one understands the literary genre out of which the material we shall be looking at emerged. Our concern, at present, is with the Midrash Rabbah (Great Midrash) and the writings that make up the Talmud. The Midrash Rabbah displays much variety in its compilation.³¹ This is evident in Shemoth Rabbah with which we are primarily concerned. The fifty-two sections which make up the comment on Exodus are divided into two distinct parts. The first fourteen sections covering the

³¹J. Bowker, op. cit., p. 77.

first eleven chapters of Exodus are a running verse-by-verse commentary on the sacred text, the remaining material in the Shemoth Rabbah is homiletical in nature with expositions on the first verse of each section. That is to say, the first part represents older expository Midrashim which are reminiscent of tannaitic Midrashim, whereas the second part represents homiletical Midrashim which share much material with the Pesiqtas and Tanhuma.³² Determining the age for this material is difficult.³³ One thing we can be confident of, however, whether the date be early or late, is that much of the material itself which comprises the Midrash goes back to ancient times. It is because of this that the Midrash commends itself to our attention in the present discussion.

Our other concern here is with the Talmudic literature itself. The Talmudim are primarily a commentary (or gemara) on the Mishnah (an essentially legal document comprising, in its various tractates, numerous regulations pertaining to every aspect of Jewish life). It was the major achievement of the Mishnah to organize and codify Israel's oral halakoth.

³²Ibid.

³³Zunz opts for a date in the eleventh or twelfth century A.D., whereas Lieberman and Hallevy argue for a seventh century date. H. L. Strack, op. cit., p. 215. J. Bowker, op. cit., pp. 79-80.

There are two Talmudim, the Palestinian and the Babylonian, each of which is the product of two or three hundred years of work by the Amoraim. The Palestinian Talmud is earlier, having taken shape at the beginning of the fifth century A.D.³⁴ By contrast, the finishing touches were being put to the Babylonian Talmud by the middle of the sixth century A.D.³⁵ Although similar in form the Talmudim differed in content, the latter, a product of the Hillel school, becoming more prominent and later to be recognised as the Talmud in most of Judaism.³⁶ It is this Babylonian Talmud which will concern us most. Also for our present purposes we need to further define our terminology. The Rabbis whom we shall be considering in what we have called the Talmudic age fall into one of four categories. Reference has been made to some of them already. There are the Tannaim who lived during the first two centuries A.D. and the Amoraim who succeeded them from the third to the fifth centuries. The work of these two groups form the major content of the Talmud. It was subsequently worked upon by the Saboraim in the fifth and sixth centuries and after that by the Geonim.³⁷

³⁴H. L. Strack, *ibid.*, pp. 29ff.

³⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 70ff.

³⁶J. Bowker, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 66. Strictly speaking, these two latter groups do not warrant inclusion in the so-called Talmudic age. They are cited here only for the sake of completeness.

Tannaite Interpretation
of the Golden Calf

What, then can be said about the Rabbinic interpretation of the golden calf narrative? As one reflects upon the writing of the Tannaim, one is immediately struck by the great preponderance of opinion which is entirely unsympathetic to the sin of the nation's ancestors. Almost unanimously the Tannaim condemn the apostasy as a heinous crime. Only Moses is singled out for worthy mention.

The Tannaim dwelt on the sheer disgusting nature of the apostasy. Rabbi Akiba, one of the most notable Tannaim in the early part of the second century A.D., commenting on the reference to the golden calf in Psalm 106, likened Israel's worship of the calf to the repulsive spectacle of an ox eating grass.³⁸ It was suggested, too, by a goodly number of second-century Tannaim pupils of Akiba, that the apostasy had been a deliberate premeditated crime.³⁹

³⁸Mekhilta on Exodus 14:29, cited by Smolar and Aberbach, op. cit., p. 103.

³⁹The Tannaim differed only on the extent of the premeditation. Rabbi Eleazar ben Jacob maintained that for twenty-nine days after the theophany Israel had followed YHWH. For the remaining eleven days that Moses was on Sinai they plotted to build the calf. The basis of this theory was derived from the statement at the commencement of Deuteronomy: "Eleven days from Horeb...by the way of Mount Seir," in which Mount Seir is equated with idolatry because of its association with Esau. Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai, however, understood this verse as twenty-nine days the Israelites had copied the deeds of

Rabbi Eleazar's disdain for the apostasy was evident in his belief that the golden calf merely gave indication of Israel's innate proneness to idolatry. Had the object been a brick, he deduced, Israel would still have idolized it!⁴⁰ The seriousness of these denunciations cannot be overlooked. Israel had been guilty of a heinous crime. They had deliberately and blatantly perpetrated it. Indeed, not only did the nation abrogate their responsibilities to the covenant and thereby the covenant

Seir and therefore concluded that they had only remained faithful to YHWH for a meagre eleven days before scheming to build the image. Rabbi Simeon ben Halafta, in considering the passage in Jeremiah 2:32 where it states: "Yet my people have forgotten me days without number," reckoned that the nation had remained in a covenant relationship with YHWH for only two days since two is the smallest plural number that would fit this text, hence YHWH had been forgotten by his people at the end of two days. (This conclusion was later substantiated by a later Amora, Rabbi Jonah, who verified it with reference to Isa. 58:2: "Me they seek only a day a day" [i.e., two days!].) According to another version Rabbi Simeon ben Halafta accused Israel of going astray from the very outset, on the very first day. This was the considered opinion of another Tanna, Rabbi Judah bar Ilai. He referred to Micah (chap 2:8) to insist that Israel's faithfulness had lasted merely a day. But it was left to Rabbi Meir of Tiberias, described as the keenest mind of his period (H. L. Strack, op. cit., p. 115), to indict the nation of false pretence at the very inception of the covenant. He quoted Ps. 78:36, "but they flattered him with their mouth and with their tongue they lied to him," to assert that Israel had not even remained faithful to YHWH for one day but that even as they stood by Sinai beholding the theophany and exclaiming obedience to God, their hearts were already plotting to rebel (Exodus Rabbah, XLII, 7-8).

⁴⁰Babylonian Talmud, Abodah Zarah, 53b.

itself, but the Tannaim accused them of infidelity in the covenant vows themselves and hence of never having ratified the covenant. It is no wonder that the Christian onslaught which came at the end of the Tannaic age was able to gain so much ground in the Mediterranean world and left the later Amoraim the unenviable task of refuting anti-Jewish polemic of the Christian Church while, at the same time, remaining true to the rabbinic tradition established by the Tannaim. The result was anything but consistent. It is extremely interesting to note that the Tannaim were not alone in their condemnation of Israel in the wilderness, for although later generations of rabbis sought to minimize Israel's blame it is nonetheless true to say that the crime itself found no sympathy from the Jewish community of faith. The whole tenor of rabbinic material in the Talmudic age reverberated with disapproval.⁴¹

In the late Amoraic period, it is somewhat surprising to notice that the denunciation not only continued but was made more severe. The apostates were accused of mockery, blasphemy, fornication and murder.⁴² Rabbi Tanhuma ben Abba writes:

⁴¹Babylonian Talmud, Shabbath, 88b;
 Abodah Zarah, 44a, 53b;
 ; Aboth, v, 4;
 Smolar & Aberbach, op. cit., pp. 102-103.

⁴²Rabbi Samuel ben Nachman in Exodus Rabbah, XLI, 1. Also Smolar & Aberbach, op. cit., p. 104.

Not only did they make an idol, but they also committed immorality and shed blood, for the merry-making (sehok) referred to here means idol-worship, immorality, and the shedding of blood.⁴³

Rabbi Judah ben Shalom was outraged by the idea derived from Ezekiel 16:19 that they took the manna which YHWH had provided for them and even had the audacity to offer it to the calf. By this time, however, there was a vast rabbinic apologetic which aimed at shifting the blame for the golden calf away from Israel. Hence it was possible on the one hand to condemn the crime and on the other to exculpate Israel. The only authentic note of impeachment came from the Tannaim for only they remained uncontaminated by the anti-Jewish polemic. Since the great age of the Christian polemicists did not gain a foothold in the ancient world until the turn of the third century,⁴⁴ the first and second century Tannaim placed

⁴³Exodus Rabbah, XLII, 1. The deduction is made on the basis of reference to II Sam. 2:14 and Gen. 39:17.

⁴⁴E. E. Cairns, Christianity Through the Centuries (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1943), pp. 75ff.. Although it is true that Tertullian and Justin Martyr functioned as polemicists in the middle of the second century and the Epistle of Barnabas is earlier still, the brunt of the Christian offensive against the Jew must be considered a late second and early third century phenomenon. A. Marmorstein has noted in his "Judaism and Christianity in the Middle of the Third Century," HUCA, X (1935), p. 241, n. 7, that "the burden of the accusation against Israel as taught by the Church from the middle of the second century onwards is not yet (viz. in the tannaitic period) discernible."

the blame squarely on the shoulders of the people. It was Israel's sin. Rabbi Meir acknowledged it in his assertion that "they deserve to be beheaded."⁴⁵

For the Tannaim, the sin was pivotal to their comprehension of the nation's history. Its effects had left an indelible mark on Israel's subsequent existence as a nation. Later calamities such as the exile and the destruction of the temple were believed to have been a direct result of the sin of the golden calf.⁴⁶ The origin of disease and even death was traced to this one episode in the nation's life.⁴⁷ Perhaps most significantly, the removal of God's presence from them was also at stake. Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai believed that the ineffable name (of YHWH) departed from them with the people's sin.⁴⁸

⁴⁵Exodus Rabbah, XLII, 9 & 5.

⁴⁶Smolar & Aberbach, op. cit., p. 107. Rabbi Isaac proclaimed that every misadventure which befell Israel was due, in some measure, to the erection of the calf. He said, "no retribution whatsoever comes upon the world which does not contain a slight fraction of the first calf." Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin, 102a.

⁴⁷Smolar & Aberbach, op. cit., p. 104; Exodus Rabbah, XXXII, 1. Rabbi Nehemiah understood the meaning of נִלְוָה (Exod. 32:16) to mean that the people had been free from the Angel of Death (Exodus Rabbah, XLI, 7).

⁴⁸Smolar & Aberbach, op. cit., pp. 104-105.

Only Moses was esteemed by the Tannaim. He was depicted as one who stood out in stark contrast to the sorry state of Israel. So adverse was his reaction to it that, according to Rabbi Judah, Moses actually became physically ill.⁴⁹

It was, however, his great intercessory prayer which elicited most praise from the rabbis. He was contrasted favourably with Noah who failed to pray at all for his wicked generation, and with Abraham who stopped short of demanding mercy for all. Only Moses achieved the highest degree of perfection for he refused to budge from his prayer until God forgave the entire nation.⁵⁰ He had stood in the breach to plead Israel's cause, thrusting aside the forces of Satan and eloquently petitioning God's mercy to rest upon them.⁵¹

Moses' action in breaking the tablets of the testimony was also esteemed by the rabbis since it was perceived as an annulment of the penalty for the people's sin. That is to say that by giving the people the commandments Moses would have involved them in serious breaches of the law and rendered them liable to the death penalty. Instead, Moses determined to break the tablets

⁴⁹Exodus Rabbah, XLIII, 3.

⁵⁰N. Leibowitz, Studies in Shemot, 11 (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1976), pp. 286-7; Exodus Rabbah, XLI, 7.

⁵¹Babylonian Talmud, Berakoth, 32a; Exodus Rabbah, XLIII, 1, 6 and XLIV, 9.

and reform the nation. Rabbi Jose stressed that the action met with divine favour.⁵²

Interestingly, the Tannaite literature does not have any major concern about textual problems within the biblical material. Those that do receive attention are of such a rudimentary nature as to warrant scant consideration.⁵³ Rather, the most significant contribution of the Tannaite era was that the Tannaim had no propensity to excuse the people of Israel from their role in the apostasy. Yet to some it may have seemed incredible that the situation should have arisen at all! Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai exclaimed that Israel were not the kind of people to act so unseemly, nor Aaron the type who would have intended to participate in an act of idolatry.⁵⁴ Even Rabbi Akiba himself, it is suggested, made YHWH acknowledge his own guilt for the golden calf!⁵⁵ But these expressions of wonder and amazement must be viewed in the context of the overall picture of the Tannaite period, and indeed alongside the other writings

⁵²N. Leibowitz, op. cit., p. 608.

⁵³Rabbi Isaac, for example, was concerned about the feasibility of the entire five books of the Torah being written on both sides of the stone tables. Babylonian Talmud, Megillah, 15a. Another concern was with the writing appearing on both sides of the tables. Babylonian Talmud, Aboth, v, 6.

⁵⁴Babylonian Talmud, Abodah Zarah, 4b; Smolar Aberbach, op. cit., p. 109.

⁵⁵Smolar & Aberbach, op. cit., p. 115.

of these same Tannaim. That picture is a fairly well unified one exuding disdain for this greatest of Israel's crimes. By contrast, it is not possible to speak thus of the Amoraic period to which we now must turn.

Rabbinic Interpretation of the Golden Calf
after the Tannaim

As one approaches a study of the Amoraim, one is immediately impressed with the diversity within the literature concerning Exodus 32. Unlike the earlier Tannaitic era, the Amoraic period is not a unified one, for the Amoraim do not speak with a consistent voice.

It has been noted already that the disaffection in which the apostasy of the calf had been held by the rabbis of the first two centuries A.D. was shared by subsequent generations of Amoraim. The seriousness of the crime was never underestimated. The blame was simply shifted away from the protagonists. In the former affirmation the Amoraim maintained continuity with their rabbinic predecessors.⁵⁶ Several of the themes introduced by the Tannaim were expounded by the Amoraim.⁵⁷

⁵⁶H. L. Strack, op. cit., p. 125; Exodus Rabbah, XLII, 8.

⁵⁷Rabbi Aha ben Jacob in Babylonian Talmud, Erubin, 54a; Shabbath, 88a;
L. Ginzberg, The Legends of the Jews, III (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909-1938), pp. 92-93, 463.

Obviously the consequences of Israel's ancient apostasy had far-reaching effects in the thoughts of the rabbis. It was determinative of the future shape of the nation. It caused a complete reorganization of Israel's hieratic structure.⁵⁸ It affected their perception of celestial beings.⁵⁹ Indeed, a few rabbis went as far as attributing the name of the sacred mountain to it!⁶⁰ Yet in all this there was nothing strikingly new in the contribution which the Amoraim were making to the traditions and legends of Israel. Their real ingenuity lay in the apologetic they developed to exonerate the nation or certainly to minimize the culpability of those who, according to the 'peshat' of the biblical text, appeared to be culpable. The result, having already acknowledged the heinous nature of the crime, was not to deny it, for that was plainly untenable, but simply to transfer the blame.

The source of embarrassment was a two-fold one. In the first place the entire nation appeared to have been culpable for it was upon all the people that YHWH was prepared to affect retribution (Exod. 32:9). In the second, the role played by Aaron, the father of Israel's priesthood, was an enigmatic one. As a result, the Amoraim

⁵⁸Smolar & Aberbach, op. cit., p. 105; L. Ginzberg, op. cit., pp. 87, 211.

⁵⁹L. Ginzberg, op. cit., vol 2, p. 309.

⁶⁰Babylonian Talmud, Sabbath, 89a.

sought to excuse their ancestors by minimizing the number of people involved and attempting to find justifiable reasons for Aaron's strange behaviour. For the rabbis it was inconceivable that everybody had participated in the apostasy. A fourth century Amora, Rabbi Abin, explained the reason why Moses appealed to the patriarchs as a response to God's demand to be shown ten righteous men that his punishment might be averted. Moses could only name seven who were not involved in the crime. These included himself, Aaron, Eleazar, Ithamar, Phinehas, Joshua and Caleb.⁶¹ Apparently some had been innocent! In another source the elders of the people remained faithful to YHWH and consequently were killed by the rabble.⁶²

A more radical theory to sweep the slate clean for Israel was to blame the "mixed multitude" that had joined Israel in their exodus from Egypt. That was to say, in effect, that the true Israelites were not responsible for the crime at all, rather it was that contemptible lot of foreigners who instigated and perpetrated the worship of the calf. God rebuked Moses for allowing them to join his band:

Did I not instruct thee not to allow a mixed multitude to be mingled with them; but thou, being meek and righteous, didst answer me, "The

⁶¹Exodus Rabbah, XLIV, 7.

⁶²Numbers Rabbah, p. 667; L. Ginzberg, op. cit., p. 123.

penitent must always be accepted." Knowing, however, what they would one day do, I replied: "No," but, nevertheless I fulfilled thy request, with the result, that it was just these people who made the calf...⁶³

Even those rabbis who did not go as far as disclaiming Israel's responsibility for the golden calf, were concerned to get the crime in its proper perspective. They emphasized that only three thousand people had been involved, for that was the number slain by the Levites. And this was a small fraction of the 600,000 Israelites who had taken part in the exodus from Egypt.

Yet even if it was conceded that Israel was guilty to some extent in the apostasy of the golden calf, the argument did not end there. For, if the nation was culpable then it was only because it was the victim of circumstances beyond its control! In other words, Israel's guilt was conditioned by forces exerted upon the people from other sources, often of a supernatural nature. Moses' delay on the mountain, it was explained, gave occasion to Satan to delude the Israelites into believing that their leader was dead. An optical illusion was formed in the sky. Moses appeared lying upon his bier, suspended between heaven and earth and the people were convinced that they had been left destitute and leaderless.⁶⁴ In a very real sense Moses, too, was inculpated

⁶³Exodus Rabbah, XLII, 6.

⁶⁴Babylonian Talmud, Shabbath, 89a; L. Ginzberg, op. cit., vol. III, p. 120; Smolar & Aberbach, op. cit., pp. 112-113.

in the blame for he had not returned at the time he had promised. By midday on the fortieth day, the sixth hour of the day,⁶⁵ Moses had not yet appeared. Had he come back when he had said he would, Israel would not have fallen into apostasy!

But if it seems adolescent to excuse oneself or one's peer group with the unsolicited adage, "the devil made me do it!" it becomes even more incomprehensible to direct the blame of Israel's sin away from the nation towards God himself against whom the crime was perpetrated! Yet this was exactly the strategy of the Amoraim. Obviously God had knowledge in advance of what Israel was going to do.⁶⁶ Indeed, while the nation were busily engraving the golden calf in the valley below, their Redeemer sat in the mountain engraving for them tablets which would give them life.⁶⁷ For the rabbis, it was clear that YHWH not only did not consider the covenant to

⁶⁵The explanation of "delayed" (וַוַּל) is given as meaning six hours had come (וַוַּ נַל), that is to say six hours after the forty days, Exodus Rabbah, XLI, 7; Babylonian Talmud, Shabbath, 89a.

⁶⁶According to Exodus Rabbah, XLII, 5, YHWH confessed to Moses: "Thou seest only one sight, but I behold two. Thou seest only how they will come to Sinai and receive My Torah, but I can see how after I have come to Sinai to give them the Torah, and when I am returning in My chariot with four animals, they will scrutinize it and withdraw one of the animals in order to provoke Me to anger thereby..." (cf. Exodus Rabbah, XLIII, 8).

⁶⁷This interesting contrast is noted by the Amora, Rabbi Levi in Exodus Rabbah, XLI, 1.

be threatened by the apostasy but actually predestined it to show that the gates of repentance were always open.⁶⁸

The idea of God fore-ordering the crime is a difficult one. The rabbis explain it better in other ways. Israel had been too long in Egypt where the people had been exposed to the idolatry of Egyptian religion. The relapse into pagan forms of worship was the inevitable consequence of this unfortunate exposure.⁶⁹ But the charges against YHWH did not end with the exposure he gave his people with idolaters. The rabbis went further to accuse God of providing Israel with the implements with which to construct the idol. Rabbi Jannai had made such an accusation implicitly⁷⁰ but Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba, one

⁶⁸Babylonian Talmud, Abodah Zarah, 4b.

⁶⁹Several analogies were drawn to explicate the predicament. God was likened to a king who bought an uncultivated field and had a labourer convert it into a vineyard. Its sour produce, however, embittered the king who did not realize that the plants were still in an immature condition and could not produce good wine. Similarly Israel was but a youth with whom YHWH must exercise patience. Exodus Rabbah, XLIII, 9. Rabbi Huna, an eminent third-century Babylonian Amora, compared God to a wise man who opened a perfumery shop for his son in a street frequented by harlots. It was only natural, therefore, that the son would fall into evil ways. So Israel had learned to do corruptly because of the people's association with Egypt. Exodus Rabbah, XLIII, 7. Yet again Rabbi Judah ben Shalom likened YHWH to a master who bought an ill-behaved slave and justly expected him to act like a good one. Exodus Rabbah, XLIII, 8. Examples of this type abound.

⁷⁰Babylonian Talmud, Yoma, 86b.

of the last of the Tannaim had been much more explicit:

It is like the case of a man who had a son; he bathed him and anointed him and gave him plenty to eat and drink and hung a purse round his neck and set him down at the door of a bawdy house. How could the boy help sinning?⁷¹

Such was the case for the defence. Israel had been the innocent victim of the cosmic struggles between good and evil. Satan was working, on the one hand, to trick the people. YHWH, on the other hand, was deliberately putting temptation in the way. And even if one concede some degree of guilt, the crime did not involve the entire nation, only a minority participated and even these were not true Hebrews, but belonged to that "mixed multitude" which accompanied the Israelites in their exodus from Egypt. And if, after all is said and done, some blame did accrue to Israel, then Israel's motive in sinning was a good one for either the calf was built "in order to place a good argument in the mouth of the penitents," or to propagate the species. In other words, Israel's sinful behaviour--if it was admitted--was justified by Rabbi Joshua ben Levi's brand of antinomianism which stated that however grievous to the crime, the sinner could rely on the efficacy of repentance.⁷²

Or, if one is to believe, with many of the rabbis, that Israel did enjoy an idyllic existence prior to the worship of the golden calf in which not even the angel of

⁷¹Babylonian Talmud, Berakoth, 32b.

⁷²Babylonian Talmud, Abodah Zarah, 4b.

Death held sway, then the third-century Amora, Resh Lakish's thanksgiving for the crime is not as ludicrous as one might imagine initially. He entreated the people thus: "Come let us render gratitude to our forebears (who worshipped the golden calf), for had they not sinned, we should not have come to the world."⁷³

The rabbinic defence of Israel was anything but a concerted one. There were damaging admissions on the one hand and strained apologetic on the other. The Christian onslaught had caught the rabbis in disarray and the Jewish cause was not enhanced by the inconsistency of the rabbinic attempts to deal with the problems.

The other source of embarrassment for the Amoraim was the compromising role which Aaron had played in the apostasy. It appears that the entire literature in Amoraic times, which was concerned with this episode in the high priest's life, had set itself the task of exonerating him.⁷⁴ Such a course of action was necessary because of Aaron's position in the nation. As the revered ancestor of Israel's priesthood, any misconduct of his would be reflected upon the entire hierarchy and

⁷³Presumably their ancestors would have become immortal, Babylonian Talmud, *ibid.*, 5a.

⁷⁴An exception to this is Rabbi Berekiah who suggested that Aaron was in fact punished for making the idol through the death of his sons, Smolar and Aberbach, *op. cit.*, p. 109, n. 22.

ultimately upon Yahwism itself. The vindication of Aaron therefore became a theological necessity. There were several excuses offered on his behalf which were elaborated upon later in mediaeval times.

It was suggested that Aaron participated in the construction of the idol for fear of his life. The tradition, in seeking to explain the disappearance of Hur's name from the Exodus narrative (he was left in joint charge of the camp with Aaron in 24:14) postulated that he had resisted the popular demand for אלהים אשך ילכן]]']] and, as a result, had been slain! When Aaron beheld the killing, the Midrash Rabbah indicated that he feared for his life.⁷⁵ However, central to the Amoraic defence of the high priest, was to point out that Aaron's concern was much more than a selfish one. He was anxious for the people, for he realized that if he refused to compromise and he too was killed, the people would not find forgiveness. They would have been responsible for the death of both a prophet (Hur) and a priest (Aaron) and as such would be liable to be exiled.⁷⁶ Better, Aaron would have reasoned, to worship an idol, for through repentance, the people would still find forgiveness.⁷⁷

⁷⁵This was done by reading נִיִּירָא as נִיִּירָא (he feared) and taking the noun מִזְבֵּחַ (32:5) (altar) as an abstract noun meaning "slaughtered one," Leviticus Rabbah, X, 3. Cf. Syriac reading.

⁷⁶Hence fulfilling the statement of Lam. 2:20; Leviticus Rabbah, *ibid*.

⁷⁷Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin, 7a.

Having committed himself to compromise, the rabbis believed that Aaron worked unceasingly to retard the Israelites' apostate pursuits. First, he demanded that he be allowed to build the altar on his own--recognizing that his progress in its construction would be significantly slower than if the people were allowed to build it themselves. He would have hoped, thereby, to delay matters long enough until Moses returned.⁷⁸ Unfortunately, because the calf was completed and Moses had not yet appeared, Aaron had to turn to contingency plans. He still hoped, the rabbis suggested, to turn the people's religious momentum into a festival unto YHWH (Exod. 32:5). Hence he proclaimed the feast for the following day expecting Moses to have returned by then.⁷⁹ Aaron's hopes, however, never did materialize and his plans were thwarted. For the rabbis, the high priest's intentions had been good, they even depicted him as standing in a comparable position to his brother Moses, believing it better that the sin of idolatry should attach to himself rather than to Israel.

Praise for Moses continued with the Amoraim in much the same manner as it had with the Tannaim. Four attributes were singled out for particular mention by the rabbis. He had interceded on Israel's behalf. His

⁷⁸Exodus Rabbah, XLI, 7; Leviticus Rabbah, loc. cit.

⁷⁹Leviticus Rabbah, *ibid.*

cleverness in his encounter with YHWH had brought its rewards. He had been willing to sacrifice himself for the sake of the nation and he exhibited enough foresight to break the tablets.⁸⁰

The Amoraic perceptions of Moses' argumentation on the mountain were ingenious as they were imaginative.⁸¹

The famous Amoraic haggadist, Rabbi Levi had Moses defy YHWH by demanding to know how he might justify his broken promises to the patriarchs in time to come! If he couldn't keep his promises to the patriarchs intact after seven generations why should Moses believe he could

⁸⁰YHWH's expression, "Let me alone" (לִי יָחַד, Exod. 32:10) is understood by the rabbis as an invitation for Moses to plead Israel's case and they compared it to a king who was angry with his son:

. . . and when the son was brought into the chamber and about to be beaten, the king cried from the chamber: "Let me alone, that I might smite him." Now the instructor (of the son) happened to be standing without and he thought to himself: "If both the king and the son are within the chamber, then why does he say: 'Let me alone'?" It must be because the king is desirous that I should entreat him on his son's behalf...Similarly...Moses inferred, "God is desirous that I should intercede with him on Israel's behalf..." (Exodus Rabbah, XLII, 9; cf. XLIV, 10, Babylonian Talmud, Berakoth, 32b.)

⁸¹Cf. Exodus Rabbah, XLIV, 4, 5. Cf. also Genesis Rabbah, XXXVIII, 13.

honour his promise to him forever? The rhetoric placed in Moses' mouth by the rabbis was, in general, extremely thorough. The arguments that gave them continued existence as the people of the covenant concerned them greatly and they were anxious to give expression to them. Some of the bizarre excesses of the Tannaitic age were avoided. Instead, the dominant theme was an implicit acknowledgment of Israel's guilt, a recognition that the nation did not have the resources to make atonement, and that the merits of the patriarchs were vicariously transferred to a nation enabled to receive God's forgiveness.

The Amoraim's appeal was to God's patient loving-kindness, a generous love which would pardon an unrepentant people and transform their bitterness into sweetness.⁸² It was to a God who had elected Israel as his people, One who had forgiven their erring and who continued to covenant with them. This, it must be said, was the Amoraic reaction to the Christian accusation that the sin at Sinai had irrevocably broken the unique relationship between Israel and their God. The Amoraim continued to emphasize the reconciliation that had taken place. Moses was depicted as exercising the power of annulment of oaths by absolving YHWH of his vow to destroy the people.⁸³ The result was God's repentance of the evil he had planned to do (Exod. 32:14).

⁸²Exodus Rabbah, XLIII, 3.

⁸³Exodus Rabbah, XLIII, 4.

Yet perhaps the phenomenon which gave the rabbis most satisfaction was the risk Moses had taken with his life on behalf of his people. The Talmud applied Isa. 53:12 to him.⁸⁴ He had poured out his soul unto death (cf. Exod. 32:32), he had been numbered with the transgressors (with those condemned to die), yet he had borne the sins of many for he had secured atonement for the golden calf and had interceded on behalf of the people (cf. Exod. 32:30). The other thing which Moses had done to save the people from their fate of divine retribution and death was to have smashed the tables of the testimony before allowing the people to see them.⁸⁵ Accolades were heaped upon Moses for he alone had found favour with God. When the envying angels had sought to kill him, Moses seized God's throne, "and the Holy One, blessed be He, spread his mantle over him, so that they might not destroy him."⁸⁶ So the legends concerning Moses continued to be preserved and enhanced for posterity by the tradition-conscious Amoraim and subsequent generations of rabbinic interpreters.

⁸⁴Babylonian Talmud, Soṭah, 14a.

⁸⁵In alluding to this episode, the Amora Rabbi Samuel ben Haḥman is simply re-echoing the ideas of an earlier Tanna, Rabbi Jose. Babylonian Talmud, Yebamoth, 62a.

⁸⁶Exodus Rabbah, XLII, 4.

By way of concluding this section of our survey on the rabbinic literature relating to the incident of the golden calf in Talmudic times, it may be useful to draw together some of the problems perceived in the text itself. This will follow on, of necessity, from our discussion on the nature of the concerns which occupied the attention of the rabbinic scholars during this period. Examples which exhibit a rather strange hermeneutic abound in the material. We have noted not a few in this survey. The idea that the meaning of a word or passage can be illumined by any other Old Testament text is common, thus there are frequent references to obscure and not-so-obscure scriptural episodes which have no obvious connection with the Sinai story and yet the rabbis draw inferences from them which determine the meaning of the Exodus narrative. Take, for example, the case of the people sitting down to eat in verse 6. This seemingly neutral expression is, for the rabbis, pregnant with innuendo: "Wherever you find the expression 'to sit' (יָשָׁב), you will find that some great delinquency occurred there."⁸⁷ Substantiations of this thesis follow the statement in abundance.

⁸⁷Exodus Rabbah, XLI, 7. Other examples of this nature abound in the literature and are too numerous to cite here. Reference had been made to many in the discussion above, e.g. the debate on the amount of time in which Israel remained faithful to YHWH of Sinai, p. 125 above.

Derived meanings from certain words were also loosely conceived. קָשָׁה-עֵר ("stiffnecked," verse 9) could mean "deserve to be beheaded" or might imply "undaunted";⁸⁸ זֶבֶחַ ("altar," verse 5) inferred "one slaughtered" (זָבַח);⁸⁹ יָרַד ("descend," verse 7) really indicated that Moses had been excommunicated by his brethren.⁹⁰ Again, this type of exegesis is commonplace in the Talmudic era. One further thing which is also immediately striking about the rabbis of the first millennium A.D. is that they were enthusiastic hagga-dists.⁹¹ Indeed, the legends which they penned to account for some of phenomena within the passage were imbued with such authority as to make them co-equal with the scriptures themselves.⁹²

⁸⁸Exodus Rabbah, XLII, 9.

⁸⁹Exodus Rabbah, XLI, 7.

⁹⁰Exodus Rabbah, XLII, 3.

⁹¹Attention need only to be paid to the vast number of analogies drawn by the rabbis to explain a difficult context. Our discussion above had alluded to several.

⁹²E.g. Exodus Rabbah, XLIV, 5 where a reference to a legend in the Genesis Rabbah is placed alongside those which are cited in scripture.

Undoubtedly because the rabbis were influenced by their belief in the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, they were able to grasp overarching themes running through the material. The text represented to these scholars a unified theme. Thus the episode of the golden calf was seen in terms of the unfolding story of the exodus. In recapping upon the nation's early history, YHWH outlined the pertinent events that highlight the people's transformation from serfdom to nationhood:

I can foresee them departing from Egypt, and
My dividing the Red Sea for them, and bringing
them into the wilderness, and giving them the
Law and revealing Myself unto them face to face,
and (I can see them) accepting My kingship, yet
denying Me at the end of forty days by making
the calf.⁹³

Integral to this unifying approach to the text was a concern to reconcile discrepancies that existed in the material and to postulate theories to account for apparent oversight on the part of the writer. Thus Rabbi Samuel ben Nahum argued that the reason why the concept of well-being was present in the second Decalogue and not the first was due to the first set of tables being destined to be broken. If well-being had been included, he argued, the covenant would have ceased to be operative altogether.⁹⁴ Similarly the problem of the disappearance of Hur from the narrative of Exodus occupied the attention

⁹³Exodus Rabbah, XLIII, 8.

⁹⁴Babylonian Talmud, Baba Kamma, 55a.

of the rabbis. Moses had left him in charge of the camp with Aaron in Chapter 24 verse 14. But he is never mentioned again in scripture. When Moses returned from the mountain, he sought out Aaron. Hur is nowhere referred to. Why? This was the question raised by the rabbinic exegetes. The answer was deduced from a tradition in which Hur had defied the wishes of the people to make an idol and, as a result, was slain. It was considered important to account for Hur's disappearance and therefore retain the basic coherence of the text.

Yet another example of how the belief in Mosaic authorship and a unified text informed the rabbis' exegesis was a relationship noted between the Tabernacle and the calf. In one tradition the gold of the Tabernacle served as an expiation for the gold employed in the construction of the golden calf.⁹⁵ In another, the lavish giving of the people for the building of the Tabernacle was explained in terms of their need to cancel the sin of the calf for "then they had used their ornaments in the construction of the idol and now they employed them for the sanctuary of God."⁹⁶ The calf had obviously met a need which the Tabernacle would later fulfill. Thus the essential contrast between the two forms of worship, the false and the true, did not escape

⁹⁵L. Ginzberg, *op. cit.*, III, p. 152.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 174.

the scrutiny of the rabbis. These interpretations, however, need to be considered against the backdrop of the rabbinical belief that the high priest performed the service of Yom Kippur in white linen garments instead of his customary golden ones because, it was suggested, the latter brought to mind the sin of the golden calf. For a similar reason the shofar used on the New Year festival was not to be made from the horn of a cow.⁹⁷ That is to say, that although Exodus 32 was related to the surrounding narrative of Exodus, it was also related to less immediate material in the Pentateuch as well as to extra-biblical tradition.

This motivation to perceive the material in a unified whole provided the rabbis with an a priori frame of reference which predisposed them to provide explanations for recurring themes in the passage. In Exodus 32 mention is made of three separate occasions of punishment. The people are forced to drink a solution of gold dust in water (v. 20), three thousand are slain by the retributive sword of the Levites, and a plague is sent upon the nation sometime later. The rabbis were not slow to notice this strange anomaly and they accounted for it in terms of the different types of sin involved in the apostasy. In other words, the type of punishment meted out was in direct ratio to the type of crime committed:

⁹⁷For these and other examples, see the discussion by Smolar & Aberbach, op. cit., pp. 108f.

A wise woman asked Rabbi Eliezer: Since with regard to the offence with the golden calf all were evenly associated, why was not the penalty of death the same?...He answered her: It is stated: Rab and Levi are disputing in the matter. One said: Whoever sacrificed and burned incense died by the sword; whoever embraced and kissed (the calf) died the death (at the hands of heaven, i.e., the plague); whosoever rejoiced in his heart died of dropsy (as a result of their drinking the water containing the gold dust, which Moses had offered them in expiation).

The other said: He who had sinned before witnesses and after receiving warning, died by the sword; he who sinned before witnesses but without previous warning, by death; and he who sinned without witnesses and without previous warning, died of dropsy.⁹⁸

Another related feature of this type of rabbinic exegesis was the relationships which were discerned between various pericopes within the passage. That is to say, because the chapter itself was seen in terms of a single author, its structure was defined deliberately. Thus the scenes on the mountain-top and in the valley below were believed to have been placed in juxtaposition presumably to highlight the people's faithlessness vis-à-vis YHWH's long-suffering fidelity. The contrast was emphasized by the language of Rabbi-Levi: "While Israel were standing below engraving idols to provoke their Creator to anger...-God sat on High engraving for them tablets which would give them life..."⁹⁹ Similarly, the

⁹⁸Babylonian Talmud, Yoma, 66b.

⁹⁹Exodus Rabbah, LXI, 1.

significance of the dialogue on whose people Israel were (Exod. 32:7; 9, 11) does not escape the rabbis. Several of them understand it as part of the central thrust of Moses' argument as he attempted to placate God. The struggle was essentially between God's disowning the nation and referring to them as Moses' people (v 7) and Moses' rejoinder that, since it was he who brought them out of Egypt, they were rightfully his people (v 11): "When Israel fail to do the will of the Omnipotent, He, as it were, no longer calls them: 'My people.'"¹⁰⁰ The use made of the pronominal marker, as Moses and YHWH debated on whose responsibility the people were, reflects a continuity in theme within the section extending from verse 7 to include verse 11.

The plural form of verse 4 did not appear to be an enigma to the Talmudists judging by the scant attention given to it. One might be justified in presuming that the plural was simply considered to be a plural of majesty, a deduction made explicit by later writers. But, if this was indeed the case, it represented a failure to take the plural formulation seriously, for it is rare for a plural of majesty to take both a plural verb and plural pronoun. Not all the rabbis, however, failed to recognise the anomaly, although those who did had to

¹⁰⁰N. Leibowitz, op. cit., p. 560.

resort to some questionable exegesis to explain it.¹⁰¹

Other problems which concerned the rabbis included the nature of the book to which Moses alluded in his second intercessory encounter with YHWH (Exod. 32:32). The Talmudic idea was one of "a Heavenly Book of Records," but three books were specified by the rabbis, each opened in heaven on New Year. One was for the wicked (that is to say, those whose bad deeds outweighed the good), it was also known as the Book of Death. Another was for the righteous, known as the Book of Life. A third was for the intermediate whose fate was suspended until Yom Kippur when they were judged one way or the other. The fourth-century haggadist, Rabbi Naḥam ben Isaac illustrated this three-fold concept with reference

¹⁰¹E.g. the plural indicated that the Israelites lusted after many gods and thus, according to Rabbi Johanan, deserved to be exterminated. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin, 63a; also in

Abodah Zarah, 53 b. But because this destruction was dependent upon the association of the Heavenly Name with another, Rabbi Simson ben Yoḥai argued that the people did not associate the gods they demanded with YHWH and therefore were spared. Ibid. Despite these rather doubtful explanations, it is clear that the plural phrase was given a plural meaning, for it is stated that Israel lusted after many gods. The fact that only one image was constructed did not appear to bother these Talmudists since one might construe a distinction between lusting after many gods but creating only one. For other rabbis the dilemma was not so easily solved and thirteen idols were postulated, one for each of the twelve tribes besides the central shrine. L. Ginzberg, op. cit., III, p. 123.

to this verse in Exodus 32. The phrase "Blot me, I pray," he argued, indicated the Book of Death, "Out of Thy book" suggested the Book of Life, and the Book of the Intermediate was discernible, for Rabbi Nahman at least, in the final phrase "which thou hast written."

Besides the nature of the book, there was also a curiosity regarding the nature of the calf. The rabbis sought to answer the question of why God's people chose the image of a calf to build. The identification of the golden calf with Apis of the Egyptians mentioned by early Christian authors was unknown in the old rabbinic sources. Instead, recourse was made to ancient haggadic tradition. As the people of Israel crossed the sea, so the story goes, they beheld the chariot of YHWH and particularly noticed one of the four animals hitched to the chariot--a calf. It was this vision which formed the basis of their selection of an image to build.¹⁰²

A final noteworthy observation of the Talmud is made in Yoma and concerns the nature of atonement in Exodus 32:30-31. For in this instance, atonement is obtained without the shedding of sacrificial blood, but

¹⁰²Exodus Rabbah, XLII, 5 and XLIII, 8; also L. Ginzberg, op. cit., III, p. 123. Objections were being raised to this legend by the time of the famous second-century tanna, Rabbi Akiba, when the feet of the angels (supposedly shaped like those of calves) gave them the idea for the golden calf. After the apostasy, the angels had to cover their feet (e.g. Isa. 6:2) to exclude the remembrance of Israel's sin from the mind of YHWH.

merely through confession. It was even argued, somewhat dubiously, that the passage in Leviticus 16 (v 11) indicated that Aaron obtained atonement for himself and his house without the bullock being slaughtered, and therefore it was achieved through confession.¹⁰³

These then, were the things which occupied the attention of the Talmudic rabbis. The problems which they discerned in the biblical material were solved within the framework of Mosaic authorship, and by allowing any text of scripture to speak to any other, and finally by recourse to haggadic tradition. The Peshat or plain-meaning of the text invariably gave way to Midrash which was predominantly haggadic in character. Any incongruity which was perceived in the passage was simply explicated by clever manipulation or by somewhat awkward exegesis. The concerns also were seen to reflect the struggles and consolidations of the rabbis' Sitze im Leben and the apologetic developed against the Christian incursion had some interesting effects upon the interpretation of the golden calf narrative. But certainly not all rabbinical literature can be dismissed merely as a product of the Talmudic age. The rabbis succeeded in catching an overview of the biblical material which enabled them to discern relationships which are frequently illusive to the modern reader.

¹⁰³The rabbis went as far as to define effective confession as one which began "O..." Babylonian Talmud, Yoma, 37a.

Their great reverence for the text forced them to seek explanations for obscurities which, in the light of subsequent scholarship, needs to be reappraised and may prove to be most insightful. A third and final comment on the positive contribution of the first millennium rabbis is that they had a significant influence upon later generations of biblical scholars who would later adopt and build upon the work of these early interpreters of the Jewish faith.

Jewish Interpretation of the Golden Calf
During the Middle Ages

For the purposes of this historical survey we shall deem the Middle Ages to extend from the close of the Talmudic era to about the time of the Protestant reformation. Most of the material we shall be looking at has come from the pens of the mediaeval Jewish commentators, for while the Jewish community, scattered throughout the ancient world, were enjoying their "Great Age" the Christian Church were experiencing the setback of the "Dark Ages." It was not a period of constructive advance for the Christian faith. On the other hand, the Jewish philosophers were engaged in reconciling the Bible to the Greek philosophy of the age in the wake of the Empire building age of the Arabs whose enthusiasm for the Koran had already prompted the Jews to new endeavours.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴B. M. Casper, An Introduction to the Jewish Bible Commentary (London: Thomas Yoseloff, 1960), pp. 50ff.

The achievements of the mediaeval scholars were often built upon the contributions of the earlier rabbinic era. Indeed, the Jewish interpreters of the Middle Ages, for the most part, saw themselves in continuity with their ancient predecessors, maintaining a zeal for the faith of Israel. The mediaevalists were still concerned with the issues of the nation's guilt in the episode of the golden calf, the part played in the apostasy by Aaron and the nature of Moses' intercessory prayer. But there was much more at stake than that. Other features of the text came under the scrutiny of the mediaeval commentators such as the relationship of Aaron's calf to those constructed by Jeroboam in I Kings 12. But most significant were the methods of interpretations adopted by these scholars. For, although the mediaevalists were concerned, on the one hand, with these traditional enigmas of Exodus thirty-two and the rabbinic attempts at solving them, on the other hand, their interests were not narrowly defined. The Christian offensive was no longer a challenge which needed an apologetic treatment of the text. The Middle Ages represented the dawn of a new age for Judaism in which the parochial concerns which blighted Jewry at the commencement of the Common Era had vapourized and the faith of Israel stepped into the light of catholic interests. If ancient Israel was to be defended in the apostasy of the golden calf, it was defended not because the Christians had forced the issue, but because it was deemed

necessary to explicate the proper meaning of the passage. Judaism had received a new dynamic from the philosophers of the time, both Greek and Arab.

It was a time when Rashi emerged in France as the most famous and the most popular of all Jewish commentators.¹⁰⁵ He was concerned neither with apologetics nor textual criticism, his aim was "to enable the reader to obtain a clear understanding of the text...to give the plain, unembellished meaning, the Peshat..."¹⁰⁶ Similarly in Spain dwelt Abraham Ibn Ezra who has been described as the forerunner of modern biblical criticism.¹⁰⁷ Examples, too numerous to mention, continue to illustrate the new age on whose threshold Judaism stood: Maimonides, the twelfth century rationalist; Nahmanides who may mark the zenith of mediaeval Jewish philosophy; and Abravanel, another in the tradition of biblical criticism. The hermeneutic of the Middle Ages represented a shift in emphasis from the lengthy, diffuse and frequently irrelevant exegesis, typical of rabbinic times, to an era that might reasonably be described as the earnest of modern biblical scholarship. Of course, one will recognize the limitations of such generalizations. The period of the Middle Ages no more developed a concerted

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 61.

¹⁰⁷L. Jacobs, Jewish Biblical Exegesis (New York: Behrman House, Inc., 1973), pp. 8ff.

exegetical paradigm than any other period ever has or ever will. Nevertheless, in very broad terms, our observation commends itself as an eminently reasonable one.

Yet this is not to say that Judaism retreated to the haven of the idealistic age of the Tannaim, prior to the rise of Jewish apologetic. The intervening era of the Amoraim and later Talmudists had been too impressive to be set aside. But although the apologetic interests were maintained it was only to the end of facilitating exegesis of the passage. In other words, if the apologetic explanations helped to make clear the Peshat of the text, allusion was made to it.¹⁰⁸ Questions were put to the text to discern the plain meaning, and to unravel the various perplexing anomalies. The approach of the mediaevalists was analytical and, insofar as we can justly use the term, scientific. Yet the scholars were dealing with a text which was perceived as the living word of God. That is to say, it was understood both spiritually and subjectively. The scriptures of the Old Testament could never have been considered as an end in themselves. Their purpose was regarded as being not only to increase knowledge but deepen faith, for no distinction was made between a critical scrutiny of the ancient material and a response of pious faith to the biblical

¹⁰⁸It is confessed that this is something of an oversimplification. One recognizes that some apologetic existed for the sake of making the faith more palatable for its own adherents as well as prospective converts.

text. This basic inseparableness between the two may prove to have been the real strength of mediaeval Jewish scholasticism.

The commentators were concerned with the question of relationships between various sections of the chapter. Why, for example, was there more than one punishment meted out to Israel? If Moses was successful in turning away God's wrath, why did he have to intercede again? Was forgiveness not complete initially? Was there one interrupted prayer or two different ones? If Moses had been told about the nature of the apostasy in verses 7-14, why did he appear to be ignorant of it in verse 18? Why were the tablets broken when Moses actually saw the calf and not before? The relationship, too, was sought between Aaron's calf and those of Jeroboam. And the attempt was made to reconcile the plural construction of Exodus 32:4 ("These are thy gods") with the singular form of Nehemiah 9:18 ("This is thy god"). Questions of a textual critical nature abound in the writings of the mediaeval commentators.

Unquestionably the belief in the Mosaic authorship and unity of composition of the present passage predisposed the Jewish mediaevalists to treat the anomalies in a certain manner. Because of the a priori that a single author related the story, reasons were sought to explain the 'discrepancies' in terms of a logical sequence. That is to say, the story was considered

to be a unit and therefore progressed logically and sequentially. If it appeared otherwise it was only because the coherence was not immediately preceptible. Take, for example, the question of the different punishments. Moses Nachmanides indicated that God's repentance of the evil which he had said he would carry out on the people did not imply that he was completely reconciled with them. Indeed, the context clearly suggests otherwise, for he sent an angel to guide them rather than presencing himself with them. God's repentance merely indicated that he would not annihilate them.¹⁰⁹ Punishment remained an operative option for YHWH to inflict upon the people. The fact that it appeared to take three different forms did not bother the mediaevalists (as it did not deter the rabbis before them).¹¹⁰

Associated with this question of the different punishments was that of Moses' prayers (vv 11-13 and 30-33). Were they one or two? Abraham ibn Ezra, the twelfth century scholar, suggested it was all a simple prayer and the two parts were inextricably bound as part of the same intercession. The narrative, obviously, had dispensed with strict chronological order. Moses had

¹⁰⁹Moses Nachmanides (Ramban), Commentary on the Torah, II: Exodus, trans. by Rabbi C. B. Chavel (New York: Shilo Publishing House, Inc., 1973), p. 560.

¹¹⁰Ramban, op. cit., p. 568. The reference here is to the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Yoma (66b) of Rabbi Levi and Rav, discussed above.

descended from the mountain, destroyed the idol and returned to pray for forty days.¹¹¹ Ibn Ezra's thesis also sought to answer a basic issue in the relationship between the two intercessions, that of the need for both. Had he not already obtained pardon in response to his first prayer of intercession? And why did he need to seek it again? This was a difficulty which the later Abravanel formulated thus:

Surely Moses had begged forgiveness for the sin of the calf before he came down the mountain. There it is written that "the Lord repented of the evil with which He had threatened His people." Since He had in so many words already relented, what need was there for Moses to petition the Lord and ask Him whether He forgave them or not...?¹¹²

We have noted, however, that Moses' first petition succeeded in averting God's sentence of total annihilation. Three thousand were subsequently slain. The fate of those who remained was left undecided. Hence Moses ascended the mountain a second time to appeal for mercy. Nachmanides insisted that Moses realized that Israel's fate depended on him and so he launched immediately into prayer for the nation and stayed God's anger. This gave him opportunity to join the camp, mete out retribution

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 559. This implication was derived from the narrative of Deut. 9:8ff where the sense of the passage would favour such an understanding of the events.

¹¹²Cited by N. Leibowitz, op. cit., p. 579.

and return to YHWH to make further supplication, "that He should entirely forgive."¹¹³

One further anomaly in Exodus 32 was noticed by the mediaevalists. It was the discrepancy between verses 7-9 and verses 17-19. Ostensibly YHWH had informed Moses of Israel's sin in some detail, and yet later in the narrative, during the dialogue between Moses and Joshua, Moses nowhere explicitly betrays his knowledge of the people's apostasy. Indeed, the subsequent breaking of the tables served to emphasize an ignorance of what had been going on! Obviously the Jewish commentators considered Moses to have known what was occurring at the foot of the mountain. Why, then, his enigmatic riddle (v 18)? Nachmanides weakly suggested that Moses was reluctant to speak disparagingly of Israel and hesitated to tell Joshua of their disgrace.¹¹⁴

But a more significant explanation of the difficulty was formulated by Ibn Ezra. He postulated that וַיֹּאמֶר ("and he said" v 18), in reality, referred to Joshua and not Moses. In this he was in substantial agreement with his tenth-century predecessor, Saadya Gaon

¹¹³Ramban, op. cit., p. 560. (The emphasis is this investigator's.) Scripture, it was believed, divided it because there were two distinct prayers. The Deuteronomic account, Nachmanides continued, did not mention the second petition explicitly because it had already been alluded to in the reference to the forty days of prayer. Ramban, op. cit., p. 561.

¹¹⁴Ramban, op. cit., p. 562.

who also attributed the words of v. 18 to Joshua.¹¹⁵ The implication was that Moses remained silent after Joshua's initial analysis of the situation, that it was, in fact, the noise of battle. On more attentive scrutiny he corrected his first perception: "It is not the sound of the cry of victory, nor the sound of the cry of defeat, but it is the sound of singing I hear."

But if this helped to explain the dilemma of the relationship between verses 7-9 and verses 17-19, the problem of Moses' breaking the tables remained. If he had known about the apostasy on the mountain top, what prompted him to wait until he reached the foot of Sinai before breaking the stone? Had he encountered something new? The question received divergent responses from the mediaeval scholars. But the earlier attempts of the Tannaim and Amoraim to solve the difficulty in terms of extricating Israel from a law which ceased to be operative with the shattering of the tables, were set aside. These were viewed as being too far removed from the plain sense of the text. Rashi observed that the people had simply shown themselves to be unworthy of the precious gift of the testimony of the law and Moses broke them merely to shame them.¹¹⁶ Abravanel, similarly,

¹¹⁵N. Leibowitz, op. cit., p. 599.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 609.

likened the breaking of the tables to the tearing up of a legal document which had been dishonoured.¹¹⁷

These were fairly typical attempts of the mediaeval scholars to come to grips with anomalies within the texts. They explained the discrepancies, if this is in fact what they were, in logical, rational and coherent terms, sometimes with haggadic allusions and always within the framework of a convinced view of Mosaic authorship and the unity of the chapter.

Relationships between the golden calf incident in Exodus 32 and other biblical material were also sought by the mediaeval Jews. The different order of events in the Deuteronomic account of the golden calf was seen in terms of the character of the writings. Deut. 9 was simply a list of Israel's transgressions in which no attempt was made to order them chronologically.¹¹⁸ A connection was also established between the Aaronide calf and those of Jeroboam. Nachmanides supposed that the former so left an impression on Israel's history that the calves at Dan and Bethel represented a regress to earlier pagan worship.¹¹⁹

The seventeenth century Conciliator, Manasseh ben Israel, wrote a short treatise on the incongruity of

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 610.

¹¹⁸Ramban, op. cit., p. 560.

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 566.

Exodus thirty-two's reference to plural gods (v 4) and Nehemiah's singular rendering (9:18).¹²⁰ In his "Reconciliation," he postulated two distinct groups of people. One group, the majority, understood the calf not as divine but merely as a medium through which God operated (somewhat akin to Moses) and hence they declared in the plural, "These are your gods." Nehemiah, by contrast, was alluding to the ignorant and common people, with whom Manasseh numbered the "mixed multitude," who considered the image to be the true God. He, therefore, referred to it in the singular, "This is your god."

Various other questions were put to the text in an attempt on the part of the mediaevalists to get to an understanding of the text--questions that did not differ greatly from those asked by their rabbinic predecessors. These questions raised concerns regarding the nature of the "book" to which Moses alluded and Moses' improper address to God, as he began his intercessory prayer, "Why, O Lord, does your anger burn..." (v 11).¹²¹ But although much of the thinking of an earlier era was reflected in the writings of the mediaeval commentators,

¹²⁰Manasseh ben Joseph ben Israel, The Conciliator, I, The Pentateuch, trans. by E. H. Lindo (New York: Hermon Press, 1972), pp. 198-201.

¹²¹See discussion of these in N. Leibowitz, op. cit., pp. 569ff., 581-585; Ramban, op. cit., 558-9, 569.

movement away from previous concerns was also discernible. Nachmanides struggled with the details of the calf's destruction (Exod. 32:20). How could gold be burnt and ground to powder? How could the residue float on the water for the people to drink? Was it to be explained as a miracle? And what of the nature of the calf? Did the idea originate in Egypt? Or, did it spring from the sight of YHWH's chariot in the skies as the earlier rabbis had proposed? Or could it have been a type of ark, "something visible and corporeal on which the glory would rest," as Abraham ibn Ezra suggested?¹²²

Many of these questions represented something entirely new, and anticipated many of the issues in the modern debate. Ibn Ezra was probably the first to formulate the theory of the golden calf being an ark and Nachmanides raised questions about the destruction of the image that was to trouble critics for centuries to come. The answers often left much to be desired as Jewish mediaevalists frequently retreated to haggadic traditions or the mysteries of the Kabala. But the questions had been raised and often the formulation of the question is of vastly greater significance than the response to it. Later scholars would take their turn at contributing an answer.

Before leaving the Jewish mediaeval commentators it must be pointed out that the fundamental issues of

¹²²Cited in Ramban, op. cit., pp. 552-3.

Israel's and Aaron's guilt which occupied the centre stage in Talmudic times remained a deep concern in the mediaeval era.¹²³ Yet the answer to the question of

¹²³Some of the more established excuses for Israel's behaviour at Sinai reappeared in the writings of the mediaeval scholars. One in particular which frequently recurred was the shift of blame from Israel on to the foreign elements within the nation, the "mixed multitude" which accompanied Israel out of Egypt. The reference in verse seven to the people belonging to Moses and not to God was taken to indicate that number who were not truly Israelite. The fact, too, that the apostates cried, "These are our gods..." suggested to the advocates of this theory that it was a non-Israelite group addressing the nation. Manasseh ben Joseph ben Israel, The Conciliator, I The Pentateuch, trans. by E. H. Lindo (New York: Hermon Press, 1972), p. 199; also Abraham ben Ha-rambam, cited in N. Leibowitz, op. cit., pp. 560-1.

Exoneration was also found in the fact that there was only a small number of calf worshippers. E.g. Judah Halevi writes: "In extremation of their sin we should remember the lack of unanimity which preceded it and the fact that the worshippers of the Golden Calf constituted only 3,000 out of a mass of 600,000 persons," cited in N. Leibowitz, op. cit., p. 551; also Moses Nachmanides argues that only some became corrupted and sacrificed to the calf, op. cit., p. 555. Moses Nachmanides went further to suggest that the rest of the people were guilty only in their evil thoughts and not in action. Moses Nachmanides (Ramban), op. cit., pp. 556-7. And the sixteenth century Yiddish work, Tzeenah-U-Reenah (Jacob ben Isaac, Tzeenah U-Reenah: A Jewish Commentary on the Book of Exodus, trans. N. C. Gore (New York: Vantage Press, 1965), p. 189), and the seventeenth century Conciliator (Manasseh ben Joseph ben Israel, op. cit., p. 200), both attach the blame of Israel's sin on Satan for it was he who, according to rabbinic tradition, showed Israel Moses' bier in the clouds and thereby confused their minds.

Israel's guilt in the sin of the golden calf was not a unified one. Rashi was frank in admitting that the ancient people desired many gods, and the guilt most definitely accrued to them.¹²⁴ This viewpoint was shared by several other mediaeval scholars.¹²⁵ Israel had committed a vile crime. And its guilt rested squarely on the nation's shoulders. But not all Jewry was so convinced, Moses Nachmanides, by contrast, disagreed with Rashi's assertion that the Israelites really did want gods per se. He argued that Israel wanted a leader in place of Moses and not another deity.¹²⁶

¹²⁴^{The writing} "Zedah La-derekh" argues forcefully against Mizrahi that the people did actually demand gods as opposed to leaders (of the nature of Moses) and therefore they were actually involved in apostasy. See N. Leibowitz, op. cit., pp. 553-4.

¹²⁵E.g. Abraham ben Ha-rambam, the thirteenth century commentator, suggested that Israel had absorbed astrological beliefs during their bondage in Egypt and their tenacious retention of them led them into apostasy. See N. Leibowitz, op. cit., p. 553.

¹²⁶He substantiated his belief by allusion to verse one, where the people attribute their deliverance to Moses and not to YHWH. Moses Nachmanides (Ramban), Commentary on the Torah, II: Exodus, trans. by Rabbi C. B. Chavel (New York: Shilo Publishing House, Inc., 1973), pp. 549-50. Much of Ramban's sentiment is re-echoed by Manasseh ben Joseph ben Israel, op. cit., p. 200.

One of the most interesting polemics to emerge came from the pen of Judah Halevi, a contemporary of Rashi. He argued that Israel had been merely wishing to facilitate their worship of YHWH through material symbols and had not been guilty of actual idolatry at all:

Then some of the people were overcome with frustration and dissention was sown until some individuals were prompted to ask for a tangible object of worship in the manner of the other nations without repudiating God who had brought them out from Egypt, merely requesting it should be placed before them to gaze upon when they related the wonders of their God...as we do with the sky.¹²⁷

In other words, Halevi offered a cogent explanation for the golden calf. The people, like people of every age, were in need of some tangible expression of worship. Their desire for symbolism was not in itself unreasonable, however "their offence lay in the fashioning of an image which had been forbidden them and in attributing Divine sanctity to the product of their own desires and hands."¹²⁸ The sin, therefore, lay not so much in a violation of the first commandment as it was a violation of the second. It seems Halevi thought the latter was a less serious breach of the legal code!¹²⁹ Images in

¹²⁷Cited in N. Leibowitz, op. cit., p. 550.

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 551.

¹²⁹Cf. J. H. Hertz, ed., The Pentateuch and Haftorahs, Exodus (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 372.

themselves, he explained, were not reprehensible as can be deduced from YHWH's command to make the cherubim for the ark. No, the culpability lay in Israel's determining their own mode of worship and creating their own ritual. Halevi's interpretation of the incident of the golden calf was a novel one and had much to commend it, for he was able to discern the significance of the location of the story within the book of Exodus. He was able, for example, to relate the false worship or ritual associated with the calf (chapter 32) to the divinely instituted forms of worship in the surrounding material of the book.

Further attempts, too, were made to exculpate Aaron. By the Middle Ages there were few who recognized that Israel's high priestly ancestor was blameworthy in the sin of the calf.¹³⁰ Abraham ibn Ezra believed it was quite unthinkable that Aaron could possibly have had anything to do with the golden calf.¹³¹ But besides the more traditional explanations of Aaron's 'innocence' several other novel interpretations of the events emerged. For example, in the ninth century Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer,

¹³⁰Judah Halevi attributed blame to Aaron though even here it was not suggested that he acquiesced in idolatry. His culpability lay in leading the rebellion from the realm of thought into that of deed," cited in N. Leibowitz, op. cit., p. 551.

¹³¹In all, his participation in the incident was seen in terms of delaying tactics in much the same way as the rabbis depicted him. Smolar & Aberbach, op. cit., p. iii.

Aaron did not even make the golden calf at all, despite the clear witness of scripture to the contrary. He simply cast the priestly diadem into the furnace and two magicians, Jannes and Jambres, who were members of the "mixed multitude" stepped in and constructed the calf.¹³²

One of the more extreme apologies for Aaron is put forward by the tenth century Jewish philosopher Saadya Gaon. He is quoted by Ibn Ezra as saying that "Aaron pretended as did Jehu." In other words, Aaron was described as pretending to worship the image in order to force the idolators into the open and declare their false allegiance. Obviously this would have facilitated their subsequent punishment.¹³³ Yet another explanation was offered by Moses Nachmanides. He suggested that Aaron fashioned the image of an ox because an ox stood at the left side of the Divine Chariot, facing north. Since destruction and everlasting desolation came from the north, Aaron supposed that by focusing attention upon the image

¹³²Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, 45, cited in Smolar & Aberbach, op. cit., pp. 111, 113. For the date of this work, see J. Bowker, The Targums and Rabbinic Literature (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), p. 85. This work also suggested another explanation for the sin which placed blame on the evil angel Samael who entered the golden calf and caused it to produce the sounds of a bull, misleading Israel to believe that it was a living deity.

¹³³N. Leibowitz, op. cit., p. 557, n.1, also cited in Smolar & Aberbach, op. cit., p. 111. The reference to Jehu's pious deception is located in II Kings 10:18ff.

the destructive forces of the wilderness would be mitigated.¹³⁴

Nevertheless, these commentators admitted that whether or not Aaron's intentions were honourable and whether or not the guilt was Israel's or the "mixed multitude's" or some other group's, and whether or not the golden calf was considered to be a surrogate Moses or a living deity, the sin did occur. The calf was erected. The people, whether few or many, did worship the image. God's wrath was incurred. Punishment was meted out. Had it not been for Moses' timely intervention, the nation of Israel might have ceased to exist. The Jewish mediaevalists were facing up seriously to the text. Arguments raged on the merits and demerits of particular explanations of difficult issues evident in the material and often the 'solutions' raised more questions than they answered. Yet the mediaeval era marked the inaugural attempts to come to grips with the biblical narrative, to scrutinize it critically and to seek to understand its unembellished meaning. The Jewish scholars endeavoured to do this always within the framework of recognizing these writings to be the repository of Israel's ancient faith and the continuing word of their living God. Such an emphasis may be worthwhile recapturing in the growing secularism of our own age.

¹³⁴Moses Nachmanides (Ramban), op. cit., pp. 551-2.

The hope for the future lies in the fact that the millions of laymen and women who read the Bible today, Jew and Christian alike, do so not for its historical or archaeological interest, but chiefly in order to satisfy a subjective spiritual need. This was the main aim, and here is the permanent importance of the Jewish traditional commentators.¹³⁵

The Interpretation of the Golden Calf
by the Post-Reformation Church

The writers of the Church in the era following the advances made by the mediaeval Jewish scholars reflect a variety of exegetical concerns, many of which correspond to those raised by their predecessors. The old Christian-Jewish controversy had long since atrophied and in its place the new hermeneutic found itself at much less variance with ancient and mediaeval rabbinic tradition than hitherto. Through Nicholas of Lyra the major rabbinic interpretations were popularized without serious criticism.¹³⁶ Indeed, where before the church had actively campaigned to assert Israel's guilt of the sin of the golden calf and the subsequent annulment of the covenant, the emergence from the Middle Ages witnessed an attempt to explicate the shame and, in some measure, to exculpate the nation. Paul of Burgos argued that the covenant was not eradicated by the smashing of the tablets. He distinguished between moral and

¹³⁵B. M. Casper, op. cit., p. 116.

¹³⁶B. S. Childs, Exodus, op. cit., p. 576.

ceremonial law and indicated that the former had been in no way affected by the sin of the calf. It had remained unimpaired. Similarly, Lapedo, the eminent seventeenth century Roman Catholic scholar, refused to believe that the entire nation had been apostate. They had erred only "in their profession of faith, not in the faith itself."¹³⁷

But the post-reformation age cannot be considered merely to have been a restatement of the theories of bygone eras. For, although many of the concerns were similar, there was frequently a repudiation of earlier exegesis. The Peshat of the text became increasingly important. Of paramount significance was the work of John Calvin.¹³⁸ His commentary on Exodus 32 is a verse-by-verse treatment of the material with attention drawn to the detail of words and phrases. Calvin's disdain for the apostasy is clearly perceptible. The people are described as contemptuous, vain and exhibiting base ingratitude and "monstrous madness mixed with stupidity."¹³⁹

¹³⁷Ibid. Manasseh ben Joseph ben Israel, op. cit., p. 199.

¹³⁸J. Calvin, The Pentateuch, Calvin's Commentaries, I (Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers & Authors, Inc., n.d.), pp. 995-1010.

¹³⁹Ibid., p. 995. The blame for the crime is plainly theirs and despite Aaron's attempts to delay their progress, even he betrays "a servile and effeminate mind" and stands condemned as an accomplice in Israel's sin. Ibid., p. 997.

As a result, Calvin saw the breaking of the tables as a severing of YHWH's relationship with his people to underscore the severity of the sin which the people had committed. The divine outburst in verses 7-9 had earlier intimated a renunciation of the nation. Yet Calvin argued that the abrogation of the covenant was not complete, for if it had been then the very existence of the Christian Church would have also been placed in jeopardy:

...it must be borne in mind, that the covenant of God was not altogether annulled, but only as it were interrupted, until the people had heartily repented. Still this temporary rupture, if I may so call it, did not prevent the covenant itself from remaining inviolable. In the same manner also afterwards God put away His people, as if He had utterly renounced them, yet His grace and truth never failed; so that He at least had some hidden roots from whence the Church sprang up anew...¹⁴⁰

The Reformer's position was an interesting one. The sin of the golden calf was viewed as a heinous crime, one deserving of God's wrath and yet one which did not abrogate the covenant irrevocably. Calvin realized too plainly that by insisting on a broken covenant the danger was invoked of making human fidelity the modus operandi of the covenant relationship instead of it depending on grace alone. Such an admission would have been an anathema to his covenantal theology.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 1003.

Yet unlike many of his predecessors, Calvin was critical even of Moses' handling of the affair and believed his petitions for his people to have been carried out in a fool-hardy manner. It was inconsiderate, imperious, preposterous and absurd for Moses to have made any demands of YHWH.¹⁴¹ So all were, to some extent, implicated in Israel's crime. It is against this backdrop of the nation's ruin that Calvin viewed the incomparable and compassionate grace of God. YHWH's covenant stood inviolable over the precarious affairs of Israel, and it was that covenant that assured them of mercy and grace. God's immutable decree provided the basis for Israel's hope.¹⁴²

Calvin's commentaries undoubtedly marked a significant step forward in the development of the exegete's hermeneutical skills. Frequently he undertook word studies which, albeit brief, were genuine attempts to get at an accurate meaning of the text. Along with the study of the root, Calvin examined the tense and present contextual use of the word. All these criteria formed checks which he imposed upon the material in order that his interpretation might reflect the Peshat of the passage. Speculation was kept to a minimum and the reformer

¹⁴¹Ibid., pp. 1008-9.

¹⁴²Ibid., p. 1000.

took every opportunity of impugning Jewish traditions which had no basis in scripture and which did not accord with generally recognized perceptions of reality.

Although in innumerable ways the reformer was quite peerless, in others he can be perceived as a product of his age. His desire to uncover the Peshat of the text was hardly innovative for, as we have seen, it was consistently a trait of the mediaeval Jewish commentators. His disdain for the Jewish explicatory legends was equalled only by his distaste for Roman Catholicism whom he likened to the idol worshippers in the golden calf story.¹⁴³ Somewhat unique, however, was Calvin's treatment of the last four books of the Pentateuch as a harmony. As a result of this strange anomaly, passages from Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy were interposed with one another and the complete overview of any particular book ceased to have significance. There no longer appeared to be a message of Exodus or of Deuteronomy per se, and much of the advances made in this direction by the mediaevalists were lost in a maze of parallel forensic interests. Subsequently, the narrative of the golden calf was associated merely with its immediate context of chapters 32-34 and its relationship to the unfolding epic of Exodus was no longer grasped.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 997.

Certainly one of Calvin's major contributions to the exegetical enterprise was his move beyond the Peshat of the text to the application of its perceived message to his reader. Whatever else Calvin was, of one thing we can be sure, his great desire was to witness the establishment of God's rule or theocracy on earth and a covenant people versed in the scriptures and living in subjection to them. It was this pious vision which prompted him, at every opportunity, to make plain to his readers how a study of the Bible would affect them. In this his contribution could be said to be significant, because not since New Testament times had the distinction between what the message originally meant and what it means for the present been so blurred. In the theological milieu out of which he had emerged, Calvin had succeeded in mediating the message of scripture to his own age. It is a distinction we shall turn to again later in our discussion for it raises issues that came to occupy the central stage in modern debate on the nature of biblical theology.

The pragmatic concerns which dogged the writings of the Jewish mediaevalists figured also in the work of the Post-Reformation writers, such as "Whatever became of Hur?" and "How could Moses have filed the complete gold mass which had been the calf into dust?" were of the order of the day. And in the search for answers the seventeenth century Puritans and eighteenth century

Conformists and Non-Conformists alike made use of some earlier Jewish traditions.

However, in fairness to them, the overall climate was one of rigorous scrutiny, attention was given to the details of the text and a constant attempt was made to apply the material to their readers. Opportunities were taken to denounce the excesses of rabbinic tradition and a growing literature was making evident a castigation of Romanism coupled with a peddling of Protestant denominational doctrines. It was an era of mixed concerns, yet one which demonstrated an aptitude for discovering the essential and plain meaning of the text, one in which the validity of the interpretations was judged by the controls and criteria established by scripture itself. The Reformation and Post-Reformation writers were true to their perceptions of the sacred material always seeking to be instructed by them.

As a consequence, for the most part, the exegesis of this period was fairly straight-forward. The breaking of the stones was no longer declared to be the irrevocable abrogation of YHWH's covenantal relationship with his people, instead it was perceived to be an emblematic display of God's displeasure.¹⁴⁴ The writing on the

¹⁴⁴Adam Clarke, the late eighteenth century Methodist commentator, went as far as to condemn Moses for breaking the tables of the law for "it was rash and irreverent; God's writing should not have been treated in this way." A. Clarke, The Holy Bible...with a Commentary and Critical Notes, I (London: Thomas Tegg & Son, 1836), p. 480.

tables themselves was not viewed mystically nor magically as earlier Jews had seen them. Rather the expression לחת כתבים לשני עבריהם לזה ולזה הם כתובים was understood to mean that there was writing on left and right sides and they folded together much like a book.¹⁴⁵

Jewish explanations of Aaron's sedition were put through the test of rigorous exegesis--several were found wanting! Take, for example, the tradition which insisted that Hur opposed the people's waywardness and, as a result, was slain for his interference. The tradition was not an unsound one since mention is made of Hur in the capacity of leader in Exod. 24:18 and nowhere later. Obviously he was omitted for some purpose. Both Matthew Poole and John Gill allowed for the possibility of his death at the hands of the mob.¹⁴⁶ Thomas Scott, on the other hand, contested the tradition, noting that the text nowhere intimated that the people assembled seditiously or with violence on this occasion and if Aaron had been scared by Hur's supposed death he would have had a much better excuse to make before Moses than that which he

¹⁴⁵ J. Gill, An Exposition of the Old Testament, I (London: John Gill, 1763), p. 474; also M. Henry, An Exposition of the Old and New Testaments, I (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1706) on Exod. 32:15; also Clarke, op. cit., p. 479.

¹⁴⁶ M. Poole, Synopsis Criticorum aliorumque Sacrae Scripturae interpretum et commentatorum, I (London: Cornelium Bee, 1669-76), p. 481; J. Gill, op. cit., p. 475.

did make.¹⁴⁷ Whether or not Hur died an ignominious death at the hands of an insurgent mob is of little consequence to our present discussion since no definitive answer is given in scripture. But the interesting feature in the present context is the examination of the tradition from the perspective of the evidence of the biblical account.

Concern for accuracy in understanding of the plain sense of the material was also seen in the amount of energy which the commentators gave to matters which might appear trivial in themselves, but for the Post-Reformation writers were important in building a comprehensive picture of the biblical scene. Thus a word study of זָרָח was essential to discover how the golden calf was constructed, and the form of the image would betray the origin of the heretical idea which was fostered in the Israelite camp. Basically, a way was sought to account for the apparent discrepancy between the calf being of the nature of זָרָח לְיָגֵד and yet Aaron forming it with some sort of utensil. One upshot of the affair was to suggest that he first cast the calf and later formed it with a graving tool to eliminate irregularities in the cast and to polish it.¹⁴⁸ Poole, on the

¹⁴⁷ T. Scott, The Holy Bible with Explanatory Notes (London: L. & G. Seeley, J. Hatchard & Son, R. B. Seeley & W. Burnside & James Nisbet & Co., 1839) on Exod., 32:2-6; 21-24.

¹⁴⁸ T. Scott, op. cit., on Exod. 32:2-6.

other hand, objected that "styli, vel caeli, sculpere & caelare proprium est, non laevigare, vel expolire; hoc enim lima & scalpro fit." And if וָרָא could not be used for polishing he understood it to mean "a pouch," from an Arab cognate. The rendering would then be that "he bound them (the gold rings) together in a pouch."¹⁴⁹

Likewise, the phenomenon which prompted Aaron to construct an image in the shape of a calf was much disputed. Various possibilities were posited. Poole was in no doubt that it was a conscious imitation of the Egyptian Apis bull, Serapis or even Isis. He insisted that the Israelites had been so infected with Egyptian idolatry that they "hankered no less after the idols, than after the garlic and onions of Egypt."¹⁵⁰ Moncaeus, however, in his classic essay "Aaron Purgatus" of 1606, was of another persuasion. He supposed that YHWH's promise of an angel to go before the people had to be fulfilled in a visible sign of some type. Such a sign, he continued, was expected by the people on Moses' return. But Moses did not return. So the people gathered unto Aaron and sought from him what they had expected from Moses: "nec aliud ab Aarone petiisse, quam quod a Mose expectarunt, &

¹⁴⁹M. Poole, op. cit., p. 482. Cf. Targum Onkelos, p. 84 above.

¹⁵⁰M. Poole, Annotations upon the Holy Bible, I (London: Samuel Holdworth, 1840), pp. 187-188.

quod Aaron sciret fuisse acceptum."¹⁵¹ Aaron, then, having seen YHWH upon his throne of majesty, and in that vision having beheld the forms of the cherubim, naturally fashioned the golden image in a comparable manner.¹⁵²

The question of the shape of the image was obviously bound up with the whole question of Aaron's

¹⁵¹M. Poole, Synopsis Criticorum, loc. cit.

¹⁵²It is evident from Moncaeus' thesis that he equated the form of the cherubim with that of calves, since few creatures other than quadrupeds could fit the description of the cherubim: "At quoniam hoc facerent humana specie, erecto vultu, & se mutuo respicientes, & alas a tergo habentes?" Ibid., p. 483. Moncaeus deduced from Ezek. 10:14 that the form was that of a calf.

Moncaeus' theory of the idea for the form of the image being that of a calf was an ingenious one, though it was not unlike earlier suggestions made by the ancients who identified the form as being analgous to the creatures in YHWH's chariot. See our earlier discussion on this. However, fascinating as the theory might have been, it did not take into account the fact which Bishop Patrick pointed out in the seventeenth century that the scriptures make no mention of cherubim appearing to Aaron or the elders of the nation. S. Patrick, Commentary on the Historical Books of the Old Testament, I (London: William Tegg & Co., 1847), p. 365. On the contrary, the indication in Deut. 4:15 was that no one viewed any form of YHWH on the day when he spoke to them in Horeb. So, then, it would have been impossible to conceive of YHWH or any of his attendants or ministers in any tangible form.

Patrick also dismissed Poole's explanation of the calf image. The imitation of the Egyptian deities did not seem at all likely to him since Aaron had witnessed the judgment that God executed against all the Egyptian gods (Exod. 12:12). What, then, was the reason for the image of a calf to be constructed? Patrick suggested this answer:

After all this considered, Aaron seems to me to have chosen an ox to be the symbol of the Divine presence, in hope the people would never be so sottish as to worship it; but only be put in mind by it of the Divine power, which was hereby represented. Ibid.

culpability in the sin of the golden calf. Both Moncaeus and Bishop Patrick excused Aaron in their explanations of the factors responsible for the construction of the image. Moncaeus went further to intimate that Aaron's building of the calf was intended to create a likeness of the celestial throne to inspire worship of the true God. The problem arose over some misuse of the image by some of the people for whom the golden calf became an end in itself, instead of being the means of bringing glory to God. But in this abuse, Moncaeus maintained, Aaron could not be held accountable. His intentions had been honourable.¹⁵³

John Gill reiterated some of the more traditional defenses of Aaron, such as perceiving Aaron's demand for the earrings, his insistence on making the image himself and the proclamation of a feast to YHWH on the following day as attempts at impeding the people's progress. Even

¹⁵³...ut quidam ex populo, nempe pii, coram throni coelestis similitudine procidebant, & Dominum Jehovam in dicta solemnitate adorabant, non vitulum; ita alii erant idololatrae, & nihil nisi vitulum, animale, foenique comestorem, in signo illo agnoscebant: Quorum omnium una eademque cum esset externa adorationis forma, non poterat Aaron idololatræ discernere a piis (S. Patrick, op. cit., p. 484).

As a result of the dilemma posed by the lack of distinction between the idolatrous and pious, Moncaeus surmised that the 'test' of drinking the water (v 20) was to enable such a distinction to be made and subsequent punishment possible.

Matthew Henry, in his famous commentary on the Bible (1706), suggested that Aaron had been humouring the people and that, in reality, his heart had been upright constantly.¹⁵⁴ Yet the part he played in the apostasy was not altogether clear. According to Henry, "a messenger of Satan was suffered to prevail over him" so that he would always remain humble as Israel's high priest. Pride and boasting would be forever silenced.¹⁵⁵

Such a turnabout on the part of the Christian Church on their attitude toward Aaron's culpability was a significant one. In the early history of the Church, Aaron was subjected to merciless criticism and now, in the era after the Reformation, Christian commentators were making use of some of the identical attempts to exonerate Aaron which their predecessors had refuted. The reason for this later defence of Aaron might have been that the Church saw itself as the new covenant people and, in continuity with the Old Testament people of faith, could not press the gravity of the apostasy too far. It may be, too, that the post-Reformation writers, in an effort to apply the text to their own Sitz im Leben, viewed the narrative much more empathetically than the polemicists of an earlier century.

¹⁵⁴M. Henry, op. cit., on Exod. 32:21.

¹⁵⁵Ibid., on Exod. 32:6.

Nevertheless, there continued to be commentators who objected to these apologetic moves. A Sorbonne theologian called Visorius, strongly attacked the position of Moncaeus by accusing Aaron of committing two evils: "Fecit nimirum, 1. ut populus scelus animo tantum conceptum reipsa perpetrarent; 2. ut quod privato errore facturi videbantur, publica autoritate facerent."¹⁵⁶ Serious, indeed, was the accusation that Aaron provided public authority to what had hitherto been the people's "private error," for in so doing Israel's future high priest was giving credence and explicitness to the nation's apostate thinking! And if this is, in fact, the sine qua non of Aaron's sin then it follows that no excuse, however mitigating, could fully exonerate the role he played in constructing the idolatrous image. "His conduct seems to have been too unreasonable to be either excused, or accounted for."¹⁵⁷ Yet no one denied that Aaron was not creating another god. (The text itself in verse 5 indicated that this was not the case.) The calf was intended merely as a "symbolic representation" of the divine power and energy. No, Aaron was not viewed by the post-Reformation writers as innately corrupt. He was seen rather as a pathetic picture of a man whose weakness led him to compromise his convictions.

¹⁵⁶M. Poole, Synopsis Criticorum, op. cit., p. 485.

¹⁵⁷T. Scott, op. cit., on Exod. 32:2-6.

Evidently the problems arising from the text were faced up to by the post-Reformation writers and seeming contradictions were reconciled within the framework of a belief in the divine inspiration and subsequent infallibility of the sacred writings. The concept of God repenting of an evil intent was foreign to their thinking and their undoubted impression of the overall teaching of scripture. It was therefore defined as a limitation imposed upon the text by a manner of human speech.¹⁵⁸ The plural form, אֱלֹהִים (v 4) was noted by some of the post-Reformation commentators, though it drew little comment. Thomas Scott simply alluded to the fact that אֱלֹהִים is joined to a plural verb only when the reference is not to the true God.¹⁵⁹ Poole's comment is directly at variance with Scott's assertion: "Plurale pro singulari usurpant (quod saepe fit cum de Deo res est, ut Gen. 20:13 & 35:7), sic enim exprimitur Nehem 9:18. Dixerunt, Hic est Deus tuus, &c."¹⁶⁰ It is interesting too that a relationship was observed between the Aaronide calf and Jeroboam's calves (I King 12) and even evoked

¹⁵⁸Cf. H. Ainsworth, Annotations on the Five Books of Moses (London: John Bellamie, 1627), p. 135; M. Henry, op. cit., on Exod. 32:12; J. Gill, op. cit., p. 473; S. Patrick, op. cit., p. 368.

¹⁵⁹T. Scott, op. cit., on Exod. 32:1.

¹⁶⁰M. Poole, Synopsis Criticorum, loc. cit.

lengthy discussion in Poole's Synopsis Criticorum.¹⁶¹

Yet nowhere is there evidence that the similarity in the formulae (אלה אלהים ישראל אשר העלוק דארץ דצרים) in Exod. 32:4 and I Kings 12:28 indicated interdependence. Poole substantiated his claim that אלהים referred to the true God by insisting that the formula אלה אלהים ישראל אשר העלוק דארץ דצרים common to both Exod. 32:4 and I Kings 12:28, must have had a similar reference point. And presumably, since Aaron constructed one image and Jeroboam two, it could not have been an allusion to them. Rather, both Aaron and Jeroboam were drawing the attention of the people to the invisible YHWH to whom these tangible expressions pointed. "These are your gods..." would have been translated "This is your god..." That is to say, "Look, Israel, at these calves (or calf) and remember the one true God to whom they refer." Now, one hesitates to get involved in the intricacies of Poole's discussion on this matter. It is better merely to refer the reader to Poole's commentary itself. The argumentation is fascinating and ingenious and speaks to many of our present concerns with the text. But it was Poole who dynamically related the two narratives of Kings and Exodus which, by itself, was no mean feat.

One of the more significant issues to arise in the seventeenth century and thereafter was concerned with the

¹⁶¹Ibid., p. 483; cf. H. Ainsworth, loc. cit.

destruction of the golden calf (Exod. 32:20). The seeming difficulty of reconciling the different methods used to destroy the idol gave rise to appeals to extra-biblical evidence to suggest that the methods were not mutually exclusive. The calf was first burned in fire, subsequently ground to powder and finally scattered upon water. How could it be, they asked, that there was any need to crush it after it had been melted? And if it was reduced to powder, how was it possible for one man, Moses, to take the time to file at the gold? And supposing he did file it down, would it have been possible for the gold to have floated in water? These were the types of questions put to the text in an effort to comprehend the nature of the calf and its ruin at the hands of Moses. The answers reflected a desire to make the account rational and reasonable. John Gill found consolation in Halley's assertion that one grain of gold could be divided into 10,000 parts and each part remain visible and Keil's discovery that a cubic thumb's breadth of gold was divisible into 47,619,047 parts all of which, again, can be seen with the naked eye. It was surmised that a particle so small and lightweight would have no difficulty floating in water.¹⁶² Some suggested that the gold was ground with a special herb which

¹⁶²J. Gill, op. cit., p. 475.

contained a dissolving property,¹⁶³ others postulated an ancient science which enabled gold to be reduced to dust speedily and which was known to Moses.¹⁶⁴ Another suggestion allowed help for Moses from other Israelite men.¹⁶⁵

One of the more interesting theories to emerge as an attempt to reconcile apparent contradictions was alluded to by the eighteenth century French commentator, Calmet. The idea, judging by the number of times it occurs in the literature, appears to have been little known and possibly too radical, for Calmet indicated that the theory was first postulated by some rabbis. Essentially, the idea was that the image was not constructed of solid gold, but rather had a wooden or stone base overlaid with sheets of gold. Calmet was not enamoured with the proposal himself:

Quelques Rabbins assurent qu'Aaron fit d'abord un veau de bois, ou de pierre, & qu'ensuite il le couvrit, ou le fit couvrir de lames d'or: mais ce sentiment est clairement réfuté par le Texte du verset 24...¹⁶⁶

However, it was a theory which was to increase in popularity in the modern era, one which we shall encounter

¹⁶³Cf. S. Patrick, op. cit., p. 369.

¹⁶⁴Cf. M. Poole, Synopsis Criticorum, op. cit., p. 488.

¹⁶⁵T. Scott, op. cit., on Exod. 32:20.

¹⁶⁶A. Calmet, Commentaire littéral sur tous les livres de l'Ancien et du Nouveau Testament, I (Paris: Emery, Saugrain et Pierre Martin, 1724), p. 591.

again. Whatever the explanation, the post-Reformation writers were clear that whatever the difficulties inherent in verse 20 were, "it is absurd to suppose that it was impossible to be done" that way.¹⁶⁷ Evidently the seventeenth and eighteenth century writers were not prepared to detract from the truth of scripture, however incomprehensible it appeared to be. If the Bible declared that a certain phenomenon occurred in a particular manner it was imperative that the reader reckon on the validity of the record. Yet, peculiarly, the real significance of the event did not always escape the commentators' pen, for in the Puritan desire to make the Bible palatable, one eminent, Henry Ainsworth, noted that the primary purpose of Moses' destruction of the calf was "that it might utterly be abolished."¹⁶⁸ His thesis antedated the controversy which would rage in the present era after a study of the Ras Shamra texts gave renewed consideration to the meaning of verse 20.

As we have seen the Puritans and later Protestant writers made use, however limited, of ancient Jewish legend which could not be in any way construed as contradicting the biblical narrative. The Bible always remained the final authority in deciding matters of interpretation. Certainly the post-Reformation writers

¹⁶⁷T. Scott, loc. cit.

¹⁶⁸H. Ainsworth, op. cit., p. 136.

betrayed a keen knowledge of the writings of the rabbis, but they remained antagonistic to rabbinic material which did not satisfy their critical scrutiny of the text. It must be acknowledged that these seventeenth and eighteenth century Christian writers took the Bible very seriously indeed. By it they sought to correct the doctrinal errors of the Church and, in particular, the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁶⁹ Through it they sought to define and defend their own theological idiosyncracies, and from it they sought to derive an ethic which would govern their whole manner of living.

Constant warnings were pressed home to the reader to avoid the errors of false philosophies which might be enshrined in ecclesiastical clothing whether papist or protestant. The message of the text was always applied to the present-day Church. Significantly, the era inaugurated by the Reformation was the first which gave overt expression to this interest in making the text

¹⁶⁹Roman Catholicism was frequently subjected to scorn and ridicule. Adam Clarke compared that Church to the idolatrous nation of Israel in Exod. 32, and Aaron to the pope. He writes:

This is one pretence that the Roman Catholics have for the idolatry in their image worship. Their high priest, the pope, collects the ornaments of the people, and makes an image, a crucifix, a madonna, etc. The people worship it; but the pope says it is only to keep God in remembrance (A. Clarke, op. cit., p. 478).

Roman Catholicism was plainly a 'fair' target of attack, with the Reformation cries still lingering upon Protestant ears. The earlier offensive against the Jews by the early Church had been metamorphosed into an appeal against the tenets of Roman belief. These latter were

relevant for its own age since New Testament times. The almost homiletical nature of much commentary reflected this concern for drawing inferences from a particular message. It was a concern which was short-lived for, with the rise of enlightenment criticism, the distinction between an original meaning of the material and a contemporary application of it became strongly established, and the work of the exegete and the homiletician soundly segregated.

The outcome of this impetus to constantly drive home a contemporary meaning of the text to the reader was sometimes seen in distorted exegesis. Where an application was not clearly perceptible, an attempt was made to allegorize or even spiritualize the material. Moses was likened not only to St. Paul in his desire for the welfare of his people¹⁷⁰ but was viewed as a type of Christ.¹⁷¹ The writing on both sides of the tables of the testimony (Exod. 32:15) was perceived as having a deeper, more spiritual meaning over and above the plain sense of

considered much more pressing to an age for whom the old Judaico-Christian confrontations appeared remote and irrelevant.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., p. 482.

¹⁷¹The ability to Christologize the Old Testament extended beyond the more obvious and comprehensible types to more obscure parallels. Numerous commentators make this equation, e.g. M. Henry, op. cit., on Exod. 32:9,10. Cf. M. Poole, Synopsis Criticorum, op. cit., p. 488. Also H. Ainsworth, op. cit., p. 136.

the logistical arrangement of the text. With regard to the law, לִפְנֵי ה' וּלְפָנֶיךָ referred to both the external letter which regulated the overt behaviour of its adherents in the sight of men, and the internal spirit of the code, that spiritual entity which only God could observe, a law written upon the heart.¹⁷² This and other departures from the "peshat" of the text raise serious misgivings about the hermeneutical enterprise of many of the Post-Reformation writers. Their overriding desire appears to have been to give the ancient material present meaning. So often, however, they ended up with a created sense, wholly or partially divorced from the clear intent of the text. (The whole question of relevance and application of the sacred writings was one that would recur throughout the history of the Church. We shall encounter it again.)

Their hermeneutic was an appeal not only to faith but to a whole life-style governed by what would be known to later generations as the "Puritan Ethic." It was a behaviour code which stressed abstinence from the excesses of immodest dress, behaviour and consumption, and the narrative of the golden calf presented ample opportunity to illustrate these abuses in Israel's idolatry! More than this, Moses was selected as an ethical model in his

¹⁷²Ibid., p. 487.

hesitation in speaking of Israel's sin (Exod. 32:18). He was not "puffed up" with prior knowledge and was not eager to proclaim the faults of others. They would be known soon enough. The net result of all this was to derive from scripture the principles that would govern life. It was achieved, with reference to the present passage, by shunning apostate practices associated with the golden calf and all that precipitated the crime and emulating the example of those who attempted to correct the situation.

The Post-Reformation perception of scripture was that the text formed a unity of expression. As a result, one positive benefit of such a position was an ability to view the text from a perspective which saw the broad sweep of ideas which held the material together in tension, despite its complex and composite nature. The various punishments in chapter thirty-two of Exodus were seen, then, not as representing different sources of the same story but as different aspects of a unified narrative. The decision not to destroy the nation (v 14) was understood as a general assurance that Israel would not be annihilated and not as a promise of forgiveness:¹⁷³ "Tunc placatus fuit in hoc, ut non deleret totum populum, & simul; at potuit delere per partes."¹⁷⁴ The slaughter by the Levites (vv 27-28) was invariably seen as a

¹⁷³A. Clarke, op. cit., p. 481.

¹⁷⁴M. Poole, Synopsis Criticorum, op. cit., p. 491.

condemnation of the leaders of the apostasy.¹⁷⁵ It was therefore necessary to subsequently seek atonement for the entire people (v 30). But Moses' plea (vv 31, 32) did not elicit a favourable outcome. A plague on all the people resulted (v 35).

The contribution of the Reformation and Post-Reformation writers has been a significant one in the Church's history, for they occupied an era of ecclesiastical transition which sought to recapture the authentic message of the Bible. These commentators and theologians existed at a time when the European continent was stirring to the dawn rays of Enlightenment philosophy and, in many ways, they represented the last vestiges of a mediaeval theocentric civilization. Soon the historico-critical approach to biblical hermeneutics would supersede the older classical paradigms and usher in a new appraisal of the literary problem. But for the Post-Reformation writers that new day had not yet come and for many following in their traditions it never would.

¹⁷⁵E.g. M. Henry, *op. cit.*, on Exod. 32:28; M. Poole, Synopsis Criticorum, *op. cit.*, p. 490.

CHAPTER III

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE GOLDEN CALF IN THE MODERN ERA

Our survey of the history of the interpretation of Exodus 32 has indicated that exegesis frequently reflected the Sitze im Leben of the various interpreters. The early Church's involvement in a polemic against the Jewish people often resulted in strained exegesis of a sort that did not consider the Peshat of the text. The driving concern to condemn the ancient Israelites often precluded other useful applications of the text. The Middle Ages saw the church locked in with its perusal of its creeds and doctrinal mysteries. They were dark days for the Body of Christ. Few undertook an explication of the Church's scriptures. Of such a time, W. Robertson Smith observed, "the believer had indeed need of Christ as well as of a creed, but Christ was held forth to him, not in the Bible but in the Mass."¹

The Reformation changed all this and renewed emphasis was placed upon the sacred writings. The message of the Bible was understood as God's present Word to the

¹W. Robertson Smith, The Old Testament in the Jewish Church (Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1881), p. 12.

Christian community. It took upon itself a powerful relevance to the Church of the reformer's day.

The history of the Reformation shows that these views fell upon the Church with all the force of a new discovery. It was nothing less than the resurrection of the living Word buried for so many ages under the dust of a false interpretation.²

This must remain our greatest indebtedness to the reformers. In the era which they inaugurated, the interpretation of scripture received a new impetus. Its relevance to the issues of the day was noted in the constant application of the message to its hearer. It was primarily the reformers and Post-Reformation writers who were responsible for fusing together the original sense with the literary sense. That is to say, the Bible was read and understood in its final form. What it had meant to the original writer, insofar as this was possible and useful to discover, determined the present meaning, for both were considered synonymous.

This distinction, or lack of it, between what the text meant originally and what it means presently continues to lie close to the heart of the dilemma of modern hermeneutics. It is interesting, therefore to observe how the issue was treated by past generations of scholars. The reformers lay in continuity with many of their predecessors in interpreting the text from the perspective of their own age. Such an approach to the Old

²Ibid., p. 14.

Testament scriptures was taken by the New Testament writers who were more concerned to discover the meaning of the Bible Christologically than they were to study it in its own right without a Christian à priori.

The fusion accomplished by the reformers between the original sense and the literary and historical sense, in that scripture was said to have one basic meaning, was in vogue only until the Enlightenment. With the rise of biblical criticism, a dichotomy was established between what a text meant and what it means. As a basic principle the new scholars affirmed that the biblical materials reflected their Sitze im Leben. The task of the exegete, then, was to put himself back into the age in which the material was written, to enter the thoughts of the original writer:

In a word, it is the business of the critic to trace back the steps by which any ancient book has been transmitted to us, to find where it came from and who wrote it, to examine the occasion of its composition...³

The net result of historical criticism was a need to reconstruct the text. The final form of biblical books was not believed to be the original form but comprised various sources interwoven into a perceptible narrative which later attracted numerous redactional accretions. The original sense, as a result, was divorced from the literal sense of a passage in its canonical shape. It

³Ibid., p. 25.

was this former understanding of a text that was of greater significance for the critical scholar.

The Rise of Historico-Critical Methodology

The important thing was to comprehend the events, traditions and concerns which existed at the time of writing the story of the golden calf. Since in our own study of the history of interpretation of the incident, we observed that the understanding of the event was determined, often in large measure, by the interpreter's own Sitz im Leben, it seemed reasonable to assume that the record of the event had also been coloured in the perception of it. And since it was no longer possible to construct the event per se, the critic had to divest the text of later accretions and determine the extent of the more ancient material which reflected the very earliest impressions of a people of their faith and of their history. Significantly, the literary critics did not seek to uncover a pre-literary history of the text. They were concerned with an original story as opposed to an original event.

Several criteria were introduced to define the parameters of literary sources. These were frequently devised on literary and stylistic grounds. For example, the different names of God indicated different writers. References to places were often perceived as reflecting parochial interests and were betrayals of the writer's

location. Many other criteria abounded to differentiate one source from another. Among the most important, however, and one that will occupy our attention in the present discussion is that of "contradiction." This, as we shall discover, played a vital role in enabling the critics to begin unraveling the various elements of Exodus 32 and to define their sources.

Contradiction is no stranger to past generations of exegetes. We have noted previously the concerns of ancients and mediaevalists alike to explain the anomalies within the text. They addressed themselves to the problems of why the chapter related three different punishments, why Moses had to intercede twice to appease God's wrath, why he refrained from informing Joshua of the true nature of the apostasy (v 18) and why he acted in a surprised manner in beholding the calf (v 19) when he had already been told of it (v 8). The explanations varied, some having more credibility than others. In the critical era the dilemma was avoided by retreat into the hypotheses of literary sources. All were genuine and sincere attempts to grapple with the enigmas of the text and undoubtedly much can be learned from both critical and pre-critical rationalizations of the discrepancies in the material.

Although Bochartus, Rosenmüller and others had already noticed the correspondence between the tales of

Aaron's calf and the calves of Jeroboam,⁴ it remained the achievement of Ewald to draw such consequences from the similarities as afforded another perspective of the narrative. It was a perspective which did not necessarily attribute historical accuracy to the passage. The lasting value of the story consisted in the ethical message it contained (which Ewald could abstract from its historical matrix). The entire episode of the apostasy and subsequent reconciliation, he described as "a glorious picture, perfect in its kind and full of eternal truth, if only it be not treated as dry historical fact."⁵

Ewald's thesis⁶ described a period in Israel's history posterior to the death of Moses in which YHWH had been worshipped under the form of a bull with the assistance of Aaronide priests. In a polemic against bull-worship, Ewald maintained that a Fourth Narrator "shifted the later setting to the wilderness period and related an idolatrous crime perpetrated by the founding fathers of Israel. In the story, Aaron was depicted as an accomplice in the people's sin since the Fourth Narrator viewed him as a type of the priesthood generally. Moses, on the contrary, was the real leader, zealous for

⁴B. S. Childs, Exodus, p. 578.

⁵H. Ewald, The History of Israel, II, trans. R. Martineau (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1883), p. 608.

⁶Ibid., pp. 605-608.

truth, obliterating the crime and directing his people in the right worship of YHWH. It is evident even from a cursory treatment of Ewald that his major concern was with the original meaning of the text--what it meant for the Fourth Narrator. By divorcing that understanding of the material from the question of historical reliability he succeeded in placing a three millenia gap between his contemporary reader and the message of Exodus. This ability to stand back from the text was an important and useful tool in subsequent hermeneutics, for it allowed a depth dimension to exist between message and hearer which introduced greater objectivity to the exegetical task. The problem arose as Ewald attempted to speak in terms of truths conveyed by the text apart from historical accuracy, because robbed of a footing in fact, the ethical message was divested of an authoritative claim. Yet despite its shortcomings, Ewald's History represented a significant landmark in the emergence of modern hermeneutics.

In the middle of the nineteenth century there was growing criticism over the nature of pious commentaries. The historico-critical approach had ushered in a more scientific and objective era which was not content to engage in homiletical reflection. One critic observed of the popular commentaries of the day that

By a series of appended remarks, plain statements are expanded; but wherever there is a real perplexity, it is glazed over with

marvellous superficiality. It may be that much is said about it, but yet there is no penetration beneath the surface; and when the reader asks himself what is the true import, he finds himself in the same state of ignorance as when he first took up the Commentary in question. Pious reflections and multitudinous inferences enter largely into our popular books of exposition. They spiritualize but they do not expound. They sermonize upon a book, but they do not catch its spirit, or comprehend its meaning. All this is out of place. A preaching, spiritualizing Commentary does not deserve the appellation of Commentary at all... Our popular commentators piously descant on what is well known, leaving the reader in darkness, where he most needs assistance.⁷

The need was for a rational, scientific and objective study of the Bible, an exegesis which would squarely face up to the difficulties in the text. The problem, however, was knowing how far to go and how much value to abstract from earlier attempts at understanding the text. Kalisch had pointed out that in their eagerness to test its critical acumen, the new hermeneutic not only disregarded its immediate predecessor but the efforts of every previous age, and unquestionably, the exegetical enterprise was given to excesses:

The treasures of the old, especially the Jewish commentaries, were neglected... The sacred records were dismembered, transposed, falsified; the most aerial conjectures were framed; and the palm was awarded to those, who excelled the rest in boldness and fanciful theories...⁸

⁷S. Davidson in Kitto's Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature, 1, p. 455, cited in M. Kalisch, A Historical & Critical Commentary on the Old Testament: Exodus (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1855), p. iv.

⁸Ibid.

Nonetheless, a new era had dawned and despite its teething problems, the innate struggle between zealous excess on the one hand and a reluctance to dispense with old ideas on the other was to shape the future development of biblical studies by establishing mutual controls on the interpretation of the text. Conservative commentators challenged the findings of liberal criticism and, for a time, produced excellent critical commentaries which achieved both a critical scrutiny of the text and a profound faith in scripture's inspiration and its historical reliability. The work of Keil and Delitzsch⁹ stands as a monumental testimony to the rigorous nature of conservative exegesis. In respect of the book of Exodus, to the commentary produced by C.F. Keil one could also add the work of Kalisch¹⁰ and Murphy.¹¹ In all, discussion of the biblical material had left the pious concerns of the earlier age and had focused on philology and historical criticism. That is to say, the conservative writers themselves had developed critical tools to analyse the meaning

⁹C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch, Vol. III (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1865).

¹⁰M. Kalisch, A Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament: Exodus (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1855).

¹¹J. G. Murphy, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Exodus (Edinburgh, 1866).

of the text and to justify its historical reasonableness. The result was frequently a commentary which reflected both insight and careful thinking.

Neither Prof. Keil nor Murphy appear to claim Mosaic authorship for the narrative of the golden calf. Both referred to the writer as "the sacred historian"¹² or more simply, "the historian."¹³ For Kalisch, too, the primary concern was not one of authorship per se, but of historical and theological authenticity. These scholars were eager to combat aspects of the destructive nature of the new science of biblical criticism. The Book of Exodus was viewed, therefore, as an integrated whole and the apparent discrepancies in the thirty-second chapter were reconciled. Kalisch rose to the challenge of the critics of his day and attempted to refute their hypercritical philology by demonstrating the unity of Exodus: "We see," he says, "the completest harmony in all parts of Exodus; we consider it as a perfect whole pervaded throughout by one spirit and the same leading ideas."¹⁴

Keil did not believe that Moses' second intercession (vv 30ff) was redundant on account of his first (vv 11ff) but that he had received no assurance

¹²Murphy, op. cit., p. 329.

¹³Keil et al., op. cit., p. 232.

¹⁴Kalisch, op. cit., p. 434.

of mercy in reply to his former entreaty.¹⁵ Neither was Murphy bothered by the incongruity of verse 35 regarding the question of who was accused of making the idol. He suggested that although Aaron actually created it, the people were also responsible because they had caused it to be made.¹⁶ And Kalisch observed that the account of the destruction of the calf could be taken at face value. Verse 20 merely indicated that the idol was totally annihilated. It was pedantic, he argued, to concern oneself with the mechanics of Moses' destruction.¹⁷ Both the works of Keil and Murphy resorted in this case to the theory of the calf's composition being that of wood overlaid with gold to explain the reasonableness of the narrative.¹⁸

Keil, in particular, squarely faced up to the difficulties in the text and indicated the adequacy of earlier explanations to resolve them. Yet Keil utilized his critical perception to provide alternative solutions to the problems, solutions which were not always without merit. If one considers, for example, the enigmatic case of the Levites as the lone respondents to Moses' challenge, or the perplexing acquiescence of the

¹⁵Ibid., p. 230.

¹⁶Murphy, op. cit., p. 333.

¹⁷Kalisch, op. cit., p. 436. He was reacting to earlier discussions on the possibility of gold dust floating in water.

¹⁸Keil et al., op. cit., pp. 222, 225-6; Murphy, op. cit., p. 331.

people to the indiscriminate slaughter by the Levites, one is impressed by Prof. Keil's treatment of the issues. In the first, he rejected the theories of both Lapidé and Calvin. He reasoned that the Levites responded not because of their guiltlessness in the affair of the golden calf (since the chapter indicated the contrary) nor of their non-participation in the paralysis which infected the other tribes, but partly because they were more prompt in their determination to confess their crime and partly out of regard to Moses who was a member of their tribe. In the second, he took issue with Calvin and Kurtz and reiterated the fact that the apostasy had been an offense against YHWH and at no time had it been associated with a rebellion against Moses. Moses' leadership had never been called into question. And therefore when Moses commanded the purge, the nation did not offer the slightest resistance. The striking phenomenon about Keil's basic approach to the problems in the text was the sheer commonsense with which he dealt with the material.

However, it must be said that Keil, Kalisch, Murphy and others represented the last vestige of conservative pre-eminence in the field of Old Testament studies. Already Kuenen's important critical examination of the Pentateuch had uncovered "manifest traces of different documents" in Exodus 32.¹⁹ He suggested that

¹⁹A. Kuenen, The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined, trans. J. W. Colenso (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green, 1865), p. 99.

there were two accounts of the story running through the narrative. His thesis was based on the contradiction which existed between verses 7-14 and 17-19. In the latter verses it appeared that Moses was still unaware of the people's sin related to him in the earlier verses. A contradiction was also observed between verses 7-14 and verses 30-32. Reference had been made in both to placating YHWH's wrath. Kuenen argued that the second reference was redundant since God had already been appeased! The section on the Levitical slaughter (vv 25-29) presented another anomaly, for if punishment had been meted out, there was little sense in the statement that it would be deferred (vv 30-34).

None of Kuenen's observations, it will be noticed, represented anything new. The ancients had alluded to these incongruities, but whereas they had sought to explain them within the framework of the inherent consistency of the passage, Kuenen preferred to attribute the text of Exodus 32 to two or more writers. Scarcely thirty years later, after the scholarly world had felt the impact of Wellhausen's Prolegomena, Ewald's History of Israel and S. R. Driver's Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament, the tenets of source criticism had become the order of the day. The struggle between orthodoxy and the higher critical movement had effectively been resolved and the ignominious fate of the conservative rally sealed.

Bishop Colenso, given at times to rude excesses, ridiculed many of the former explanations of anomalies within the text. He was not satisfied, for example, with the supposition that although Moses knew of the apostasy prior to his encounter with it in the camp, he deemed it unnecessary to inform Joshua and was so much more indignant at seeing the sin for himself that he lost control and smashed the tables then and not before. The material, he believed, more obviously reflected two distinct writers. At this point Colenso introduced another criterion to distinguish the sources in Exodus 32, that of differences in phraseology.²⁰ He did not elucidate, however, on the nature of the differences, but merely stated that they existed. Basically, Colenso did not believe that the event of the golden calf could be considered history and was at odds to demonstrate, as opportunity permitted, that the entire episode was a fabrication. The "Original Story," he postulated, comprised verses 1-6, 15-33 and 35. By this he meant that these were the sections which came to the hands of the Deuteronomic writer where they were modified or supplemented. In this instance D added verses 7-14 and 34.

²⁰J. W. Colenso, The New Bible Commentary by Bishops and other clergy of the Anglican church critically examined, Part II: Exodus (London: 1871-2), p. 98.

Within a few years, Wellhausen was to divide Colenso's original story even further. Since his history indicated that the idea of a Levitical hereditary priesthood was not an Israelite conception until the later kingdom of Judah, the ordination formula "to fill the hand" in Exod. 32:29 betrayed the fact that the section relating the Levites' claim to the priesthood (vv 26-29) was a later insertion into the narrative.²¹ The net result of this research was to atomize the text into its component parts. These parts were determined in Exod. 32 by three criteria: first, anomalies within the passage; second, late interpolations which were recognized on the basis of the newest reconstruction of Israelite history; and third, specific words and phrases which had elsewhere been established as indicative of particular sources.

Dillmann's commentary, published in 1880, made a significant contribution to the source study of the book of Exodus. It was to become a standard reference tool for subsequent generations of Pentateuchal scholars. In continuity with earlier works and, in particular, that of Kuenen, Dillmann reiterated the incongruities within Exod. 32. Such incongruities often seemed to focus on the problem of v. 18 where Moses appeared to be unaware of what was going on in the camp despite his previous

²¹J. Wellhausen, Prolegomena to the History of Israel, trans. J. S. Black and A. Menzies (Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1885), p. 152.

knowledge of it (vv 7-8). Yet Dillmann was also concerned with the lack of chronological consistency within the passage and insisted that the section on the Levitical slaughter (vv 25-29) followed immediately after Moses' initial return to the camp (v 19a). It made good sense to have Moses' terse appeal for repentance and commitment uttered at the entrance to the camp precede the outburst of intervening verses (i.e., 19b-24).²²

It is perhaps significant that Dillmann appeared not to be unduly perplexed by the three different punishments that occur in Exod. 32. They stood together in the final form of the text without contradiction. The first punishment regarding the drinking of the gold solution (v 20) was not a punishment at all, according to Dillmann, but a symbolic gesture whereby the idol was annihilated without trace.²³ In understanding the nature of the Levitical slaughter, in the second instance, Dillmann resorted to ancient interpretation and explained it not as a punishment upon the entire nation but merely upon the seriously rebellious, those who took a leading part in initiating the apostasy and who numbered some 3,000 persons.²⁴ Verse 34 reserved punishment for an

²²A. Dillmann, Die Bücher Exodus und Leviticus (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1880), p. 332.

²³Ibid., p. 340.

²⁴Ibid., p. 342.

unspecified future time and the final verse referring to a plague upon the nation represented a proleptic announcement of the fulfillment of verse 34.²⁵

Dillmann designated most of the chapter as belonging to source C. This comprised verses 1-14, for Dillmann refused to attribute verses 7-14 to a Deuteronomistic redactor. He argued that it was not uncommon for C to present God in a human manner and that additional criteria for differentiating between verses 1-6 and 7-14 were lacking.²⁶ The C narrative was resumed again in verses 19b-24 and thereby omitted the section on Moses' and Joshua's descent from Sinai! In this, C recorded the calf's destruction and Aaron's anaemic excuse in creating the image. The C narrative was taken up again in verses 30-34 which related Moses' intercession and the prophecy regarding punishment.

Source B, however, was the older story into which C had worked itself with new viewpoints and teachings. ("C wie gewöhnlich, so auch hier im Stofflichen sich an B anschliessend, aber neue Gesichtspunkte und Lehren einarbeitend."²⁷) The emergent picture of Dillmann's analysis of Exod. 32 maintained the original concerns of Kuenen, in that he was forthright in declaring that two major sources were at work in the passage relating two

²⁵Ibid., p. 343.

²⁶Ibid., p. 339.

²⁷Ibid., p. 333.

distinct stories with traces of another source A and a redactor (R). The sources could be represented thus:

B Narrative

Moses and Joshua descend the mountain with the tables inscribed with God's finger. They hear the noise of reveling and discover the apostasy (vv 15b-19a). Moses appeals for fidelity to YHWH. The Levites respond. They slaughter 3,000 men and are rewarded with the priesthood (vv 25-29).

A Narrative

Moses descends with tables of testimony (v 15a following on from 31:18).

C Narrative

The people, disturbed at Moses' absence, demand gods. Aaron accedes to their demands and builds a golden calf. The people worship it. On Sinai YHWH informs Moses of the apostasy and his intention to slay people. Moses intercedes for Israel and appeases God's wrath (vv 1-14). He breaks tables at mountain foot, destroys calf and demands an explanation from Aaron (vv 19b-24). Moses intercedes a second time.²⁸ God promises his angel to direct Israel. He foretells of punishment (vv 30-34).

Redactor (R) supplemented the narrative by adding verse 35 as a short summary of a story possibly standing elsewhere in C.²⁹

Dillmann's 'sure' criteria for differentiating one source from another lay in the occurrence of certain words and phrases which demonstrated an affinity with

²⁸The first intercession did not achieve full pardon, hence there was a need to intercede a second time: "Selbstverständlich ist damit noch nicht...die Vergebung Gottes für den Abfall des Volkes erlangt...sondern nur die sofortige Vertilgung des Volks oder der erste Zornesausbruch Gottes ist abgewandt," *ibid.*, p. 339.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 343.

particular sources elsewhere in the Pentateuch. With a well-defined vocabulary systematized into source groupings, Dillmann was armed with the necessary tool which facilitated the process of correlating sources. A used the expression לחת העדת whereas B employed the phrase לחת אבך.³⁰ A catalogue of B words also included: גבורה, אלהים, חרות (v 16), לחנה (v 17), רעה, חלשה (v 18), פרע (v 25).³¹ C words and phrases by contrast, included על פני האדמה (v 12),³² התפרק (v 24), and ללא יד (v 29), usually characteristic of A, on this occasion belonged to B.³³

Dillmann's commentary was unquestionably a thorough piece of work, not only in his source analysis of the text and his philological studies, but in his observations on the meaning of the material. Defining sources never became an end in itself, but was perceived as a means of comprehending the concerns of the original writers. In this quest, it was observed that C sought to emphasize God's mercy and grace in forgiving his erring people and to contrast Aaron's weakness with Moses' greatness as leader and mediator.³⁴ It may be that this

³⁰Ibid., p. 331.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., p. 333.

³³Ibid., p. 342.

³⁴Ibid., p. 333.

aspect of the commentary provided the lasting value of Dillmann's work, for these were still early days for source analysis and most of Dillmann's conclusions would not stand the scrutiny of later critical scholarship.³⁵

Subsequent analyses of the text of Exodus 32, on the whole, resisted the temptation on the one hand to proliferate sources by postulating new ones and on the other hand to depart from the by-now-established designations of J, E, D, and P. Admittedly the extrication of sources in Genesis had proved to be a relatively easy process, but even though Exodus also displayed signs of a composite nature, the definition of sources was not always clear. Indeed the problems became more evident after the third chapter. One of the principal discriminating features of the E document disappeared. It was the use of יְהוָה as the divine name. And after Exod. 6:2, P used אלהים as the divine name and hence an important means of discriminating J from P was lost.³⁶

Nonetheless there could be no escaping the fact that "a careful, unprejudiced reading of chapter 32 which should fail to disclose manifold prima facie incongruities

³⁵See Appendix C, "Literary Analysis of Exodus 32."

³⁶See B. W. Bacon's discussion of these problems in The Triple Tradition of the Exodus (Hartford: Student Publishing Co., 1894), v. vii. He confessed that "the mere use of 'Yahweh' no longer serves as in Genesis, to prove a passage Yahwistic or redactional," *ibid.*

and contradictions would be an impossibility."³⁷ In this, Bacon reiterated the observations of earlier sages. It will be helpful to compile a full list of these discrepancies:

- a) Despite God's assurance of forgiveness in verse 14, severe punishment is meted out subsequently (vv 19f., 25ff., and 35).
- b) There are three different punishments in the passage (vv 19f., 25ff., 35).
- c) The third punishment comes directly after a second intercession of Moses in which a suspension of punishment had been granted (vv 30-34).
- d) Moses appeared ignorant of the nature of the noise in the camp in his conversation with Joshua (v 18), despite having been told of it by YHWH (vv 7ff.) and pleading on behalf of it (vv 10ff.).
- e) Moses carried the tables down the mount and broke them in sight of the calf (v 19), despite his manifest disposition early in learning of the sin (vv 7ff.).
- f) Verses 19-24 bring Moses within sight of the camp, and then within it, while verse 25 carries one back to the point where Moses is first entering the gate.
- g) Verses 25-29, taken by themselves treat not so much a religious crime like idolatry, as they do rebellion, insubordination, or mutiny. This corresponds well with

³⁷Ibid., p. 127.

the expressions עָרַף and עָרַף-הַשָּׁמַיִם and is compatible with the people's submissiveness (vv 20ff.).

h) Aaron was the main culprit and yet is immediately afterwards exalted to the highest priestly rank.

All these anomalies, perceptible in the text, formed the basis of higher critical formulations and indeed furnished the key to the various analyses. It was generally recognized that two distinct, fairly complete stories existed side-by-side. When they were extricated, the incongruities disappeared, leaving two self-consistent narratives, usually understood as J and E. The Yahwist was described as a religious historian who was interested in the nation vis-à-vis the individual, whereas the Elohist was seen more in terms of an historian of theocratic succession. The former viewed the monarchy as the salvation of Israel. He was an aristocrat, a patriot and a high-churchman. The Elohist, by contrast, sympathized little with the monarchy, attempting when possible to vindicate the theory of theocracy.

He is the most radical of Puritans, a democrat profoundly sympathizing with the people, though impatient of their folly and weakness, an advocate of spirituality in religion and liberty in the state, jealous of foreign influence to the degree of narrowness and arrogance in his ideal of the kingdom of God, in all things a prophet of the prophets and a Hebrew of the Hebrews.³⁸

By way of completing the picture, the Priestly writer was depicted as an historian of the religious

³⁸Ibid., p. xl.

institutions of Israel. It was an emphasis away from theocracy towards hierocracy in which the high priest replaced the judge and prophet. P material generally supplemented the history of J E but was based on "historical traditions current in priestly circles...at the time."³⁹ These three sources, then J, E, and P, would be considered responsible to one degree or other for the text of Exod. 32 in the form we now have it.⁴⁰

But just how could one abstract one source from another? In essence the answer had already been given. The incongruities gave the clue to determine which sections could not co-exist. When the material was thus unravelled the units were examined to discover the peculiar phraseology each employed and the concerns they reflected. The findings were correlated with the already recognized traits of J, E, P and whatever. The result was a meticulous concatenation of elements which comprised a given source.

Thus as one turned one's attention to Exod. 32 one could discern vested interests in the several sections which comprised the unit. Since E's emphases were upon Moses as a prophetic figure and a more spiritual view of

³⁹S. R. Driver, The Book of Exodus (Cambridge: University Press, 1911), p. xii.

⁴⁰P is included only for the sake of completeness. It is generally believed that the expression לְכָל לְכָל (verse 15) is priestly. Nevertheless this is the only trace of P in the chapter.

God, most of the early critics came to the conclusion that the narrative of the golden calf was primarily a product of E.⁴¹ The interests of J, however, were more evident in the anthropomorphic language of verses 12 and 14 (which showed a striking similarity with the language of Gen. 6:6f., considered also to be J material) and in the priestly concern with the fidelity of the Levites which was "rewarded by a perpetual tribal prerogative of the priesthood."⁴²

In general there was broad agreement round about the turn of the nineteenth century on the source analysis of Exod. 32.⁴³ This agreement was the more significant when one reflects upon the absence of confidence expressed by the early critics in defining the sources comprising this chapter. S. R. Driver had confessed that the structure of the narrative was intricate and in parts uncertain for "though it displays plain marks of composition, it fails to supply the criteria requisite for distributing it with confidence in every detail between the different narrators."⁴⁴ Carpenter had also conceded a similar

⁴¹Ibid., p. xxxvi; also J. E. Carpenter and G. Harford, The Composition of the Hexateuch (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1902), p. 182,

⁴²Bacon, op. cit., p. xxxvi, xxxix; Carpenter and Hartford, op. cit., p. 182; A. H. McNeile, The Book of Exodus (London: Methmen & Co., Ltd., 1908), p. cxx.

⁴³See Appendix C, "Literary Analyses of Exodus 32."

⁴⁴S. R. Driver, Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament (Edinburgh, T & T Clarke, 1891), p. 39.

point. Exodus 32, he said, has "long been recognized as among the most intricate and difficult portions of the combined documents."⁴⁵ Bennett, too, adds to the chorus of these scholars: "We cannot now indeed assign with certainty, a date, a place of origin, and still less an author to every section."⁴⁶

Yet in spite of these overt reservations, the analyses of the chapter did not manifest wide variations. The pictures which emerged followed a basic pattern something as follows:

Verses 1-6 (or 8)	= E material
Verses 7 (or 9) - 14	= Redactional (or J)
Verses 15-24	= E material
Verses 25-29	= J material
Verses 30-34	= E material or J or redactional
Verse 35	= E material.

The largest body of the material was attributed to the Elohist writer for the aforementioned reasons. However, it had been recognized that the distribution of anomalies within the passage⁴⁷ excluded the possibility of the section containing verses 12 and 14 (either 7-14 or 9-14) and the section relating the Levitical purge (verses 25-29) from forming part of the main body of Elohist material. In the former instance, the anthropomorphic language was much more reminiscent of J material. And by

⁴⁵Carpenter and Harford, op. cit., p. 210.

⁴⁶W. H. Bennett, Exodus (Edinburgh: T&C & E. C. Jack, n.d.), p. 4.

⁴⁷Cf. earlier list on pp. 217-18.

attributing it to the Yahwistic source the discrepancy between God's assurance of forgiveness in verse 14 and the subsequent punishment (vv 25 and 35) was removed, as was the problem of Moses' apparent ignorance of the apostasy in verse 18. If verses 7-14 were designated as the work of a later redactor, the E narrative would not have been cognizant of a tradition in which Moses had been informed of the people's crime on the mountain-top.

Similarly, if one attributed the story of the Levite's retribution and slaughter of 3,000 to a source other than E, many of the passage's enigmas would have disappeared. For instance, it would have accounted for a difference in the punishments meted out against the people. It would have explained the strange anomaly concerning the location of Moses within the camp (vv 19-24) and at its entrance (v 25). Besides, this section (vv 25-29) could have been understood as a completely independent unit, narrating an incident in which the Levites quelled a mutiny and which was later incorporated into the fabric of the golden calf story. With the unit's undoubted emphasis upon Israel's hieratic structure, and in particular the interest on the Levitical origin of the priesthood, verses 25-29 were invariably seen to be reflecting the concerns of the Yahwist.

The conclusion that the section on the Levitical purge was an anachronism was substantiated by the re-interpretation of Israel's history popularized in the

works of Wellhausen and Ewald. That is to say that the fact was well recognized which supposed that Israel's hieratic structure had not reached the developed stage we often imagine prior to the period of the monarchy. The Levites, it was believed, gained supremacy over the Zadokite priesthood after the destruction of the temple in 586(7) B.C. and certainly in postexilic times.⁴⁸ As a result, they were re-written back into the ancient documents, their rights and privileges were traced to the next most important personage in ancient tradition, and in Exod. 32:25-29 the attempt had been made to create an impressive origin for them.

With the removal of these two units (vv 7-14 and 25-29) from the present matrix of Exod. 32, the anomalies inherent in the text were significantly reduced. There was broad agreement among the early critical scholars in their findings with regard to these two blocks of material. The latter was clearly Yahwistic and bore no direct historical relationship to the incident of the golden calf. Verses 7-14, however, though bearing much of the marks of Yahwistic influence and language⁴⁹ was most generally believed to have been an addition by a redactor.⁵⁰ Because

⁴⁸Cf. McNeile, op. cit., p. lxix; see also App. C.

⁴⁹The section contained J phrases such as וַיִּשְׁמַע and וַיִּשְׁמַע (v 12), Cf. Carpenter & Harford, op. cit., p. 332 n.

⁵⁰Note that Bacon (op. cit., p. 135) insisted that this section was not redactional per se but bore the impress of primitive material which led him to assign it to J.

of the parallels with Num. 14:11, Dt. 9:12-15 and 26-29, Steuernagel and McNeile both suggested that it was a Deuteronomic insertion.⁵¹

One does not want to over-simplify the achievements of the early critics in their analyses of Exod. 32. Indeed, the picture one perceives is often needlessly complex, and one can reasonably contrast the dogmatic assertions of Bishop Colenso on the one hand with the humility of Driver's theories on the other.⁵² Critical conclusions had to remain tenuous for they were constantly being scrutinized and modified. The E material itself was being revised and supplemented. Bacon postulated that one encountered a different E after Exodus 3 from the basis of the Pentateuchal narrative.⁵³ The criterion he appeared to utilize to discern E₂ from E₁ was the greater laxity with which the former used וַיִּתֵּן. Kuenen and McNeile subscribed to variations of this idea.⁵⁴ E₂, it was believed, was responsible for the narrative of the golden calf, for it had been written by one who rejected the

⁵¹Carpenter & Harford, op. cit., p. 332n; McNeile, op. cit., pp. xxxv and 205,

⁵²Driver was careful to point out that the anomalies might be more apparent than real and that verses 7 and 8 were not necessarily by a different hand from verse 18f. (op. cit., p. 350).

⁵³Bacon, op. cit., p. lii.

⁵⁴Ibid., McNeile, op. cit., pp. xxxiii-xxxv.

cultus of Ephraim and its calves at Dan and Bethel, and who was therefore different from the E who delighted in relating theophanies to these sanctuaries.

Yet despite the lack of agreement between scholars, all were convinced of the composite nature of the chapter, and for the purpose of this survey, it is important to focus attention upon the broad lines of agreement of source analyses. Basically the narrative was seen as Elohist, whether written by E₁ or E₂ was of little consequence. The thread of the story ran through verses 1-6, 15-24 and 30-35. It was interrupted only by a redaction which contrasted the mountain scene with that in the valley below (vv 7-14) and by an anachronistic story of the origin of the Levites as Israel's priestly sect (vv 25-29). Some, too, have seen in verses 30-34 a redactional summary which anticipated J's fuller account in parts of chapters 33 and 34. Verse 34 may have been an ex post facto reference to the fall of the northern kingdom under Hoshea (722 B.C.) or the fall of the southern kingdom under Jehoiachin (597 B.C.) or the nation's final collapse under Zedekiah (587 B.C.). Verse 35, at any rate, was considered to be more obviously an Elohist conclusion to the story of Exod. 32.

Critical Analyses in the Modern Era

With the dawning of the new age following the close of World War I the elements of source analysis

as a viable twentieth-century hermeneutical science stood marshalled to provide a study of the scriptures with the fundamental tools of biblical interpretation. The earlier works of Dillmann, Bacon and McNeile had formed the basic framework for understanding the narrative of the golden calf and Driver's classic tome was to inform the methodological approach of subsequent generations of Old Testament scholars. This is to suggest that the analyses of Exod. 32 remained fairly much the same over the past one hundred years. As one might imagine, many of the details exhibit wide variations in both the recognition and delimitation of the sources, but the basic criteria for defining and identifying them remained constant. The dominant factor in critical procedure which provided evidence for a variety of sources continued to be narrative inconsistencies.⁵⁵ Differences in style and diction were generally used only to substantiate the conclusions already reached on the basis of the discrepancies and were not perceived as being definitive in themselves. Exod. 32, therefore, was recognized as being of a composite nature on the prior grounds of the text's lack of consistency rather than any inherent differences in style. This is an important point

⁵⁵Cf. G. B. Gray, A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament (London: Duckworth & Co., 1919), pp. 21ff.

to bear in mind for one is reminded that the discernment of discrepancies within the chapter was not novel with modern interpreters but goes back to ancient times. The distinction between the ancients and the moderns is essentially one of different reactions to the anomalies in the text.

Few contemporary critics were naïve enough to suppose that the task of defining sources with any precision in Exodus 32 was merely mundane. Even a scanty perusal of analyses of the chapter will reveal a multifaceted picture and accord with Lehming's conclusion: "über die Quellenscheidung in Ex. xxxii gibt es keine einheitliche Auffassung."⁵⁶ Yet for the most part, the narrative was viewed as a conflation of Yahwistic and Elohist material. These after all were considered to be so similar in character as to facilitate their fusion. In Exod. 32 one could not tell with any degree of certainty which source provided the original core of the story.

To the JE core narrative, the critics postulated the later addition of secondary accretions. And except for the two most obvious insertions into the text relating Moses' first intercession (vv 9-14) and the Levitical slaughter (vv 25-29), the wide divergences in ideas

⁵⁶ S. Lehming, "Versuch zu Ex. XXXII," Vetus Testamentum, X (1960), p. 16.

concerning what comprised redactional comment illustrated the precarious nature of the critical conclusions.

In defining the nature of the sources, it was necessary to extend their traditional (or well-attested) characteristics to include others that more specifically related to the golden calf incident. E's interests, according to Eissfeldt, were enlarged to include the production and smashing of "die Urkunde des Bundes."⁵⁷ Whereas E depicted the people as fearful, J saw them as "unternehmungslustig und neugierig."⁵⁸ Eissfeldt was careful to point out that with the extraction of the traditional sources there still remained a body of material which portrayed military-political phenomena. Eissfeldt called this material the "Laienquelle" (L). It was more ancient than either J or E and made up the verses relating Joshua's dialogue with Moses (vv 17, 18) and the Levitical slaughter (vv 25-29).⁵⁹ It was Eissfeldt's conviction that these verses were the only remains of an account of a rebellion in the Israelite camp during Moses' and Joshua's absence.⁶⁰

The idea that the narrative of Exod. 32 reflected an ancient tradition was not uncommon in the inter-war

⁵⁷O. Eissfeldt, Die Komposition der Sinai-Erzählung Exodus 19-34 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1966), p. 16.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 20.

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 5, 23.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 24.

years. Albright alluded to an early tradition which lay behind the story of the golden calf and which had parallels in Syria, Mesopotamia and Asia Minor for over three millennia.⁶¹ He argued that it was based on a very old Hebrew conception of the storm-god, where the deity was envisaged as standing on the back of a beast. The concept of the golden calf could then be perceived as one of a throne upon which the invisible YHWH was thought to be enthroned. Another who perceived an ancient tradition behind the narrative was Dussaud:

L'empressement avec lequel Aaron se prête aux désirs du peuple, le choix qu'il fait lui-même, comme la chose la plus naturelle du monde, de la figure du taureau, sont évidemment des traits directement empruntés à l'ancienne tradition éphraïmite.⁶²

As a consequence of the story's antiquity, it was further maintained that it contained a kernel of truth. The actual event itself had been eclipsed but it was possible to recognize that some crisis in the nation's early history prompted the transmission of the tradition for posterity.

There in some way, the nature of which is not clear, but which had apparently to do with the worship of a molten image of some kind, the sanctity of the place was violated by Israel,

⁶¹W. F. Albright, "The Golden Calf and the Cherubim," Journal of Biblical Literature, LVII (1938), p. xviii.

⁶²R. Dussaud, Les Origines Cananéennes du Sacrifice Israelite (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1941), p. 244.

and in His anger Yahweh commanded Moses to lead the people away from the mountain.⁶³

Keyser, too, was convinced of the credibility of parts of the narrative and viewed the intercession of Moses as authentically Mosaic, recorded by the ancient leader's own hand.⁶⁴

Yet even though it was the view of most that Exod. 32 housed a historical nucleus, the present form of the story was perceived as coming into existence at a time much later than the Mosaic era. The similarity in motif and language between Exod. 32 and the prophet Hosea's denunciation of the idolatrous practice of image worship suggested the eighth century as the terminus a quo for the story of an Aaronide calf. It had been devised for polemic purposes in the struggle of the Jerusalem priests against the Bethel shrine.⁶⁵ This argument which

⁶³J. Morgenstern, "The Oldest Document of the Hexateuch," Hebrew Union College Annual, IV (1927), p. 136.

⁶⁴H. J. Keyser, A Commentary on the Second Book of the Law Called Exodus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. Ho., 1940), p. 418.

⁶⁵E.g. J. C. Rylaarsdam, "Exodus: Introduction and Exegesis," The Interpreter's Bible, I (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952), p. 1064. This date, posterior to the eighth century reflects Rylaarsdam's position, though he is careful to qualify his judgment with the statement that "it would be difficult to demonstrate that Moses could not have been confronted with apostasy in this form." R. E. Clements makes a similar point in referring to Israel's antipathy to any representation of deity in image form. He goes on to say that "no reason exists for doubting that the prohibition of images of Yahweh goes back to the Mosaic origins of Yahwism." R. E. Clements, God and Temple (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), p. 28.

highlighted the significant fact that there did not appear to have been anyone prior to Hosea who spoke out against idol worship in Israel was a powerful one and a strong case was made out for a late date. Pfeiffer went as far as pushing the date up to 600 B.C.⁶⁶ Hence its position in the present structure of Exodus was designed not only to perpetuate an ancient core narrative as part of the annals of Israel's history, but to act as an object lesson for the nation's progeny:

Given the fact of sin and obedience, chapters 32-34 raise issues that are inescapable when chapters 1-15 and 19-24 are taken seriously. The covenant was broken when Israel denied Yahweh as King (32:1,4,8).⁶⁷

As we have pointed out, it was the unanimous opinion of the modern critical scholars that clear-cut criteria for discerning sources in Exod. 32 were largely lacking. It was believed to be possible to give a late eighth century date to the dominant tradition in the chapter because of the likelihood that it reflected a rivalry with a Dan-Bethel tradition and an affinity with the sentiments of Hosea. That is to say, because of the obvious similarities between the Aaronide calf and the Jeroboamic calves established at the northern sanctuaries of Dan and Bethel, it was imagined that the story in

⁶⁶Pfeiffer, Introduction to the Old Testament (London: A. & C. Black, 2nd ed., 1952), p. 377; cited in B. S. Childs, Exodus (London: S. C. M. Press Ltd., 1974), p. 579.

⁶⁷J. C. Rylaarsdam, op. cit., p. 1063; see also H. J. Keyser, op. cit., p. 412.

Exod. 32 had been invented as a precedent to condemn those tenth century calves. Yet, even if this could be sustained, it was evident that the chapter was of such a complex composition that it was imperative to set out the various traditions behind the narrative and seek to discover their Sitze im Leben.

We have noticed already that some had suggested that within the complexity of Exod. 32, there were tell-tale fragments which might have indicated a historical nucleus of an incident difficult to retrieve. Yet whether or not such a core narrative did exist, practically all were agreed that the essential motif of the story was devised as a polemical tool to combat idol worship in Israel in the eighth century B.C. or later. However, the polemic could not account for all the material in Exod. 32. The chapter's composite nature necessitated an assessment of the extent of other traditions and sources that comprised the material. Verses 9-14 had obviously no direct connection with Jeroboam's idolatry and some of the language used in this section was so reminiscent of Deuteronomy that several scholars were led to believe that these verses were, in fact, a deuteronomic redaction.⁶⁸ The Levite passage, too, was judged to be a later addition: "its real aim," wrote Noth, "is not to describe the punishment of Israel but to

⁶⁸Cf. Literary Analyses Chart, Appendix C.

narrate and give reasons for the entrusting of the priestly office to the Levites."⁶⁹

Noth proceeded to indicate other sections in the golden calf narrative which were not integral to the polemic against Jeroboam and exhibited incongruities of one type or another. Aaron's role, he suggested, was superfluous to the narrative.⁷⁰ The subordinate clauses which refer to Aaron in verses 35 and 25 were secondary additions. The conversation between Moses and Aaron in verses 21-24 were out of sequence and therefore additional.⁷¹ Noth went even further to posit two different Aaronide strata for he felt that verse 5 presupposed a more original text than 1b-4.⁷² The result of much of Noth's deliberations was an idea favouring one basic narrative which had been expanded into several strata by secondary additions. The basic narrative he assigned "in some way" to J.⁷³

⁶⁹M. Noth, Exodus (London: S. C. M. Press Ltd., 1962), p. 245. This tome is a translation of a 1959 work, Das zweite Buch Mose, Exodus.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, p. 244.

⁷¹It was argued that Moses' standing by the gate of the camp (v 26) would have preceded his activities within the camp (vv 20ff.).

⁷²M. Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 246.

In postulating one underlying source in Exod. 32, Noth was breaking with most of his predecessors who were convinced that two continuous narrative threads ran through the chapter. The problem, however, of assigning it to J was apparent. J was usually considered to belong to the time of David and Solomon, and if one attributed Exod. 32 to an era reflecting a polemic against Jeroboam, not to mention a period contemporary with Hosea, there would have been obvious difficulties in assigning the basic matter of the chapter to J. Either J would have had to be significantly later or Exod. 32 must have represented a subsequent literary addition to the J narrative. Noth adopted this latter proposal. The story of the golden calf was inserted "to accommodate the condemnation of the cult introduced by Jeroboam within the great comprehensive description of the prehistory and early history of Israel provided by J."⁷⁴

Despite the difficulties of the detailed working out of the delimitations of sources, it had become evident that the composite nature of Exod. 32 had been established. Yet no real consensus of opinion had been reached and basic theories were myriad. It was one thing to discern incongruities within the material and therefore to posit sources, but it was quite another thing to define which sources were operative in a given

⁷⁴Ibid.

incongruity. That is to say, it appeared certain that Moses' first intercession (vv 9-14) and the Levitical slaughter (vv 25-29), at least, were secondary accretions to the basic story of the text, but actual criteria to identify sources were absent. The result, at best, could only be a very tentative offering of a source-critical analysis. The most that could legitimately be stated was to affirm that the chapter was composite and that the major blocks of material included vv 1-6, 7-14, 15-24, 25-29 and 30-35. And it was not certain whether one basic narrative or two lay at the bottom of an earlier text. Noth's theory of one major strand of material which formed the groundwork of the present chapter, as we have seen, was a departure from the thinking of the critics of his day, but it was further elaborated upon by Immanuel Lewy a few years after the publication of Noth's Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch.

Levy argued that although five personages contributed in the production of Exod. 32, four of these were merely annotators.⁷⁵ The groundwork was provided by J (vv 1-4, 6b, 15, 19a, 20ab, 21-25 & 30-33) and the annotators included a Yahwist reviser (vv 5, 6a, 15a, b, 35), a northern prophetic Elohist (vv 16-18, 34a),

⁷⁵I. Lewy, "The Story of the Golden Calf Re-analysed," Vetus Testamentum, IX (1959), pp. 318-322.

a southern priestly Elohist (vv 26-29) and the deuteronomistic editors (vv 7-14). From these deductions Lewy was able to perceive the theological forces which were at work in shaping the thinking of the writers. The J section, for example, revealed an author whose God was benign, patient and forgiving. He displayed more sympathy with the prophetic cause vis-à-vis the priests. Moses was depicted in glowing terms as exhibiting responsible and dedicated leadership in contrast to Aaron who was portrayed as self-righteous and ineffective.

According to Lewy, the basic framework was revised by the priests of the Yahwist's time who exculpated Aaron and represented YHWH as a frightening deity who sought to punish his erring people. After the partitioning of Solomon's kingdom, the northern prophetic Elohist, possibly Elisha, added verses 16-18 and 34a. He embellished the miraculous character of the tables and reinstated the exalted position of Moses. His contemporary in the south, possibly Jehoiada, was much more legalistic with a greater interest in exact data and figures. His contribution was to add the episode of the activity and prominence of the Levites in the whole sordid affair. The deuteronomistic editors writing after the fall of Samaria interpolated the last remaining section in the narrative, verses 7-14, and added the veiled prediction of the catastrophe of 722 B.C. in verse 34b.

In this stripping away of the various strata of the chapter, Lewy was convinced that the Pentateuch as a whole evolved not as an amalgamation of originally independent sources, but from a basic sacred Yahwistic source which subsequently underwent modification and accretion from other sources with vested interests to propogate and canonize. The core narrative was always held in high regard but it was necessary for it to reflect the concerns of the established leaders at any given time. Of the tenth-century priestly revisers, Lewy said,

The priests of the united kingdom appreciated the book as an excellent piece of work...but the J document was too unorthodox for their priestly views and interests...they had to revise it slightly to mitigate certain offensive innovations, and to restore, to a certain extent, sacred popular traditions.⁷⁶

Now it is important to realize what was going on here. Few would have denied the existence of sources which together made up the Pentateuch and, in particular, the narrative of Exod. 32. Yet after the Second World War, the basic Documentary Hypothesis which sought to define the manner of Pentateuchal growth was being challenged. Lewy's analysis represented a recourse to the old Supplementary Theory which experienced a revival from the Canadian theologian Winnett.⁷⁷ The original

⁷⁶I. Lewy, The Growth of the Pentateuch (New York: Bookman Associates, 1955), p. 149.

⁷⁷F. V. Winnett, The Mosaic Tradition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1949). Wagner and van Seters might be mentioned also in this regard.

story had been perceived as a core which had known subsequent modifications in Hezekiah's time and later by the Deuteronomist and the priestly writers. Exod. 32 facilitated such conclusions. It was far from certain that two independent stories of the apostasy co-existed in the chapter. Indeed, according to several scholars, most recently Noth, it seemed likely that the narrative core was Yahwistic. Lewy's analysis of Exod. 32 was very much a product of his time.

In 1960 Sigo Lehming attempted to re-examine the motives which lay behind the production of Exod. 32.⁷⁸ His traditio-historical approach claimed to be basically different from the previous interpretations of Eissfeldt and Noth in that it focused upon the traditions which lay behind the story rather than the sources per se. In spite of the fact that Lehming did not do full justice to Noth, his contribution to the study of the golden calf incident was a significant one. In fairness to Noth it behooves one to point out not only that Lehming detected the disunity of Exod. 32 on the basis of already well-established incongruities in the text, but that Noth had noticed the similarities between Aaron's calf and those of Jeroboam and had discerned the polemical motive behind the creation of the Aaronide calf myth as being directed against the calf cult at Dan and Bethel.

⁷⁸S. Lehming, loc. cit.

Lehming's originality consisted in what he made of the narrative strands in Exod. 32. Tracing two major traditions in the chapter Lehming separated them by means of the discrepancies which he perceived in the text. Because the punishment of the apostasy appeared to be both immediate (v 35a) and postponed (v 34) and because it was stated that the gold was both burned and pulverized, Lehming perceived two independent calf stories. On the basis of verses 1-4a and 20 he deduced that one was made of gold, the other of wood. The golden calf and the allusion to a future punishment (v 34) was, he believed, a clear reference to Jeroboam's images. Evidently verse 20 related the story of another calf which could not be considered golden since it was exposed to a combination of methods of destruction which precluded it from being of the substance of gold. Wood accommodated itself more easily to the account of the material's destruction by fire, grinding and the scattering residue as dust. The tradition was obviously one of a wooden calf along with which Lehming coupled the tradition of an immediate punishment.

Having established two separate traditions in the narrative, Lehming divided the material selectively into the sections which belonged to one or the other tradition and those which were totally independent of either. The result was a rather detailed analysis of the chapter. Incongruities and different emphases

within the chapter significantly contributed to his understanding of the extent of the traditions. Tensions were noted between Moses' intercession (vv 30-33) and immediate judgment (v 35a) as well as between immediate and postponed judgment (v 34). The former was a type of tension which Lehming called "synonymous," the latter he called "antithetical" and argued that it was impossible for both types to co-exist. In this way a composite picture of the two calf traditions emerged. Verses 20 and 35a were perceived as belonging to each other and were seen to clash with verses 1-4a, 30-33 and 34a b. These latter verses, then, were considered to form the basis of the golden calf story while verses 20, 35a and 19a (the latter presumably because of the mention of לֵיִשׁ) was believed to comprise the wooden calf tradition.

But which tradition was earlier? The most reasonable explanation is the one advanced by Lehming. The wooden calf story reflected a very ancient tradition concerning an event the date of which was obscure, but which probably occurred in Israel's early history, possibly even at Sinai.⁷⁹ In the later development of a polemic against the golden Jeroboamic calves at Dan and Bethel, the wooden calf story was utilized and, by means of adaptation and modification, was transformed into an incident which related the condemnation of a golden calf.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 27.

The result was an attempt to merge the two traditions. But since Lehming had already supposed that verse 34 a&b cannot be connected with verses 20 or 35a, he suggested that it was placed after verses 30-33. And verse 35a, which originally followed verse 20, was made to follow verse 34a&b after the inclusion of verses 30-33.⁸⁰ Otherwise the intercession in verses 30-33 would have been senseless, for neither the punishment nor threat of punishment could logically precede Moses' intercessory prayer.

The growth of the present text, however, was complicated by the loss of the original wooden calf narrative and later insertions which attempted to redress the imbalance. The result was that by the time the story came into the hands of the Yahwist it was already of composite nature. It reflected an original core narrative of an apostasy concerning a wooden calf, part of which had been lost and subsequently supplemented and later still modified by a merger with a later golden calf tradition reflecting a polemic against the Jeroboamic calves. Hence verses 1-4, 6, 15a, 19a, 20, 30-33 & 35a formed a piece of tradition which had already been supplemented and used in a calf polemic against the sanctuaries at Dan and Bethel through the inclusion of verses 7, 8 & 34a b.⁸¹

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 26.

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 26-27.

Yet another stage in the growth of Exod. 32 was the Yahwist's incorporation of a tablet myth which was originally designed to give canonical authority to chapter 34. Lehming's argumentation was something as follows: Originally there was only one account of the receiving of the tablets related in the present thirty-fourth chapter of Exodus. At such a time the narrative of chapter 34 preceded that of chapter 32. Hence when the tablets were destroyed in Exod. 32 and the literature rearranged with chapter 32 placed between Exod. 31:18 and 34:1 to explain the relationship between them, it was necessary to create a myth of a second set of tablets which would give credibility to those produced by Moses in Exod. 34. In other words, Lehming was suggesting that the tablets had been introduced in chapter 34 to give the covenant contained therein canonical prestige. Since they had been subsequently destroyed and the text rearranged, Exod. 34 was left relating the contents of the tablets which no longer existed. So, as Exod. 31:18 introduced the first set, Exod. 34:1 was inserted by a later redactor to introduce the covenant contained on the tablets in chapter 34.⁸²

Peculiar to the Yahwist's understanding of the tablets was that they were made of stone and that they

⁸²Ibid., p. 39.

contained only the covenant.⁸³ Lehming argued that this understanding of the tablets was the one evident in Exod. 32. The fact that Moses was both able to carry the tablets and smash them indicated that verses 15a⁸⁴ and 19b belonged to J.⁸⁵ Verse 16, too, was considered to be secondary J while the other allusion to the tablets in verse 15b was reckoned to be a redactional addition to explain how so much writing was placed upon two tablets.⁸⁶ Broadly speaking, the mention of the tablets in Exod. 32 (i.e. vv 15a ,b,16 & 19b) was Yahwistic. It had been J who had incorporated the tablet myth into his Sinai narrative to emphasize the condemnation of the apostasy of the calf.

Verses 25-29, by contrast, were not perceived by Lehming as Yahwistic. They were unnecessary for J's purposes. He had already utilized two punishment traditions: immediate punishment (v 35a), associated with the wooden calf story, and postponed punishment (v 34b), related to

⁸³Ibid., pp. 34, 36. By contrast P called them לְפָנֵי יְהוָה which presupposed a knowledge of them in the ark. For P they contained not only the covenant code but the entire laws included in Exod. 25-31.

⁸⁴Apart from the priestly expression לְפָנֵי יְהוָה.

⁸⁵S. Lehming, op. cit., p. 38.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 36.

the golden calf polemic. The destruction of the wooden calf and the ordeal of the people drinking the infected water (v 20) was also considered to have been a significant aspect of the immediate punishment motif. There was no need to multiply the severity of retribution. Lehming maintained that the purpose of the section comprising verses 25-29 was aetiological, to explain the origins of the Levitical priesthood.⁸⁷ It was a much later insertion in the text than those verses (i.e. 7,8 & 34a b) which the Yahwist had used to supplement the traditional frameworks in the polemic against the Jeroboamic calves. But apart from establishing the terminus a quo for the Levite section as being the erection of the sanctuaries at Dan and Bethel, it was impossible to date verses 25-29 with any confidence. Since non-Levitical priests were employed at the two northern sanctuaries, Lehming was of the opinion that the section was introduced into the narrative as a polemic against the priesthood there.⁸⁸ For the writer, it was evident that the terms לֵוִי and כֹּהֵן were not interchangeable and that only the Levites had the right to the priesthood.

With the incorporation of the 'Aaronide bits' into the present passage, one encountered another phase in the chapter's composition. Not only did Lehming

⁸⁷See Appendix C.

⁸⁸S. Lehming, op. cit., p. 49.

perceive a polemic in Exod. 32 against the Jeroboamic calf cult per se and against the non-Levitical priests at Dan and Bethel, but he further believed that traces existed in the text which indicated a subsequent polemic against an Aaronide priesthood at the northern sanctuaries.⁸⁹ It was probable that the priests at Dan and Bethel later adopted the name of Aaron as a distinguishing mark. This most recent polemic led to Aaron's historization as the betrayer of the people of Israel. He was introduced as the maker of the calf and depicted as a weak, ineffective leader (vv 1b-4a,5,25b & 35bb). Verse 25b was seen as pivotal. In this verse Aaron is described as having "loosed" the people. It was an early piece of Aaronide tradition and supposedly gave rise to the inclusion of other Aaronide material. The need was perceived to provide a concrete historical event which verse 25b demanded. So the story took on an innovation: during Moses' absence it related a defection to Aaron.

Later still, and from a different hand, came verses 21-24. Their tendency was to exonerate Aaron and shift the blame back again unto the people.⁹⁰ Lehming went on to complete the picture by pointing out that the "Joshua bits" (vv 17,18) were incorporated into the

⁸⁹Cf. T. J. Meek, "Aaronites and Zadokites," American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature, XLV (1929), 149-166.

⁹⁰S. Lehming, op. cit., p. 48.

narrative sometime after the work of the JE redactor and that chapters 32 and 33 were then placed in front of chapter 34 by Rjep. The priestly phrase לִפְנֵי פָּנֵי was subsequently harmonized with the Yahwistic tablet myth and finally came the Deuteronomic material (vv 9-14). Lehming's appraisal of the composite nature of Exod. 32, then, knows numerous layers mostly of a polemic nature founded upon a basic, ancient narrative core. His method of determining the motivations behind the writings was extremely helpful. He uncovered a polemic against the Jeroboamic calves, against the non-Levite and subsequent Aaronide priests at Dan and Bethel. Latterly, by the rehabilitation of Aaron, Lehming perceived the assertion of the preeminence of priests of the Aaronide sect. This traditio-historical approach enabled the scene to be set for a renewed consideration of the creativity of the source writers and the role they played in collecting and assimilating diverse traditions. Yet the basic tool employed by Lehming as he began the process of delimiting the extent of the traditions was identical with that utilized by the source critics. It was one of discerning the nature of a passage's complexity by unravelling the anomalies within the passage. These discrepancies were constantly the clue to getting behind the text.

Lehming's traditio-historical study of Exod. 32 was a significant contribution to critical scholarship

although disagreement would rage over the extent and nature of the traditions. Barely had Lehming's findings been published when Beyerlin challenged the thesis of the nature of the core narrative:

Verse 20 which certainly does not permit any definite conclusion that the calf-image was made of wood (as Lehming himself admits...), offers no satisfactory basis for a conjecture of such far-reaching implications. Nor do vv. 7-8 permit the conclusion that underlying them must be a tradition which knew only of a wooden image.⁹¹

Basically, Beyerlin observed that the first six verses in the chapter read without a break and argued that any attempt to postulate such could not be sustained. By contrast the rest of the chapter could be readily divisible. Moses learned of the apostasy in two different ways and there were two accounts of Moses' intercession. The discussion is a familiar one.

Another departure from Lehming's study was Beyerlin's insistence that the chapter in its basic form was a product of the Elohist as opposed to the Yahwist. By so designating it, he was taking a stand against current analyses⁹² and, at the same time, shaping the direction of scholarly thinking for the next decade. Behind the narrative of Exod. 32:1-6, Beyerlin believed

⁹¹W. Beyerlin, Origins and History of the Oldest Sinaitic Traditions (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), p. 18, n. 119.

⁹²Cf. the analyses of Noth, Lewy and Lehming (schematized in Appendix C).

there lay an old northern Israelite tradition, an aetiological narrative, which was probably handled by the Elohist. Evidence to substantiate this was found in the direct reference which the passage contained to the tradition represented by Exod. 24:12a, 13b (15a), 18b, in which Moses has to spend forty days and nights on Mt. Sinai. This tradition had previously been attributed to the E-source. Similarly the position of the camp at the foot of the mountain (Exod. 32:19a) accorded with the Elohist tradition of ch. 19:16b-17, and Exod. 32:17-18 belongs to the same tradition as the fragment preserved in 24:13a, 14, and the source underlying 17:8-16 which, because of its emphasis on northern Israel, was designated E. In other words, Beyerlin was arguing that Exod. 32 which was composed of different variants of tradition, corresponded to and continued the work of the Elohist in ch. 24:18.⁹³

Because verses 21-24 appeared to borrow its language from verses 1-6, they were considered a later accretion, arising from E-material and attaching itself to the E-source. And verses 25-29, because of their close connection with the passage about Levi in the blessing of Moses (Deut. 33:8f.) which was believed to be of northern Israelite origin, were attested as being nearer to Elohist tradition than Yahwistic. This conclusion was

⁹³W. Beyerlin, op. cit., pp. 20f.

reinforced when considered against the background of the historical circumstances of the northern kingdom after the time of Jeroboam I. Verses 30-34 were also allocated to the E-source since the idea of God dwelling on the mountain was inherent in the passage.

Even verses 7-14 which were most frequently regarded as a Deuteronomic addition were assigned to E by Beyerlin.⁹⁴ In subject-matter, he argued, it contained no specifically Deuteronomic elements and Moses represented the prophetic function of intercession in much the same manner as in verses 30-34 which were already established as Elohist.

Several other critics later followed Beyerlin's lead in opting for an Ephraimite source. Stalker, Davies and Hyatt,⁹⁵ to mention but a few, preferred to assign most of the material of the chapter to E. And in an article on the two concepts נִצַּן and לַעֲלֹךְ in 1965,⁹⁶

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 21. Beyerlin did recognize that vv. 7-14 had much in common with the language of Deuteronomy, but suggested that this did not necessarily imply Deuteronomic origin. Rather, it appeared likely that both Exod. 32 and the forms of expression used in Deuteronomy stemmed from the language of the cult.

⁹⁵D. M. G. Stalker, "Exodus," Peake's Commentary on the Bible (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd., 1962), pp. 208-240; G. H. Davies, Exodus (London: S. C. M. Press Ltd., 1967); J. P. Hyatt, Exodus (London: Oliphants, 1971).

⁹⁶J. Wijngaards, "נִצַּן and לַעֲלֹךְ a Twofold Approach to the Exodus," Vetus Testamentum, XV (1965), 91-102.

Wijngaards demonstrated that the use of the latter term to express "exodus" was well attested in pre-Deuteronomic times and was at home in the northern kingdom. It had a liturgical character and recurred in decidedly cultic exclamations,⁹⁷ and it may be because of the illegitimate cult of Dan and Bethel that the word fell into disuse in the post-exilic writings. אלול occurs in verses 1, 4, 7, 8 & 23 of Exod. 32. In each case, Wijngaards has designated it as belonging to the northern source.

נשאל, although not usually occurring in both themes of the Exodus and the Conquest, appears in verses 11 and 12. One might expect it to have originated in the Deuteronomic school of Heilsgeschichte, for this accords well with Wijngaards' hypothesis, yet following Beyerlin, Wijngaards assigned its occurrence to the Elohist source also.

In all, then, Exod. 32 was perceived as the embodiment of Elohist tradition. E had taken an old aetiology which reflected the cult of a calf-image at Bethel and in his enthusiasm to condemn the cult, he deliberately made the creation of the golden calf conflict with the revelation of God's will on Sinai. What had been considered legitimate worship of YHWH in this old cultic aetiology was now regarded as a breach of the covenant. According to Beyerlin's traditio-historical

⁹⁷Exod. 32:4; I Kgs. 12:28; Neh. 9:18.

analysis the major thrust of the narrative of Exod. 32 (vv 1-6, 15-20 & 35) grew out of a definite, historical form of the cult of YHWH. Other sections reflected other group interests. Verses 21-24 might have been an expression of priestly interests after the destruction of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem when the Aaronide priesthood achieved greater power and influence.⁹⁸ And verses 25-29 were determined by the group interests of the Levitical priesthood which found in it the aetiological explanation and defense of their right to the priesthood.⁹⁹ So then it was Beyerlin's contention that the entire chapter grew out of certain contexts in the history of the cult and used well-established cultic-ritual forms. Whereas Lehming had postulated the chapter's composition as a number of polemic layers clustering around an ancient traditional core, Beyerlin's concerns were with the cultic-ritual forms of the layers. The major disagreement revolved around the nature of the ancient narrative core.

As an example of cultic formulations, Beyerlin cited verse 20. Burning, he suggested, was an act of purification whereby the cultic object was not only destroyed but the power residing within it was annihilated as well. The emphasis was on the totality of the destruction, the complete removal of the venerated object:

⁹⁸W. Beyerlin, op. cit., p. 132.

⁹⁹Cf. A.H.J. Gunneweg, Leviten und Priester: Hauptlinien der Traditionsbildung und Geschichte des israelitisch-judischen Kultpersonals (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), pp. 48ff.

Because the gold of the calf image could not be obliterated by fire the dust which remained was mixed with water and given to the Israelites to drink. In this way, it was intended, the idol would be "disposed of" without remainder and got rid of entirely. The Deuteronomist, on the other hand, makes the remainder of the broken image be washed away by a brook (Deut. 9:21), corresponding to the rite of purification in Deut. 21:6. Thus, both versions of this tradition follow definite cultic-ritual forms.¹⁰⁰

One of the most significant studies of the golden calf to emerge in the modern era came in several articles written by Samuel Loewenstamm between 1962 and 1975.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰W. Beyerlin, op. cit., p. 131. To say that Exod. 32 in its present form reflected cultic orientation was not to imply that it was unhistorical. Beyerlin's traditio-historical analysis indicated that vv. 1-6 should be interpreted as a cultic aetiology explaining the construction and cultic veneration of the calf-image at Bethel. It was possible that the southern Ephraimite cult was not introduced by Jeroboam but had been already in existence prior to the break-up of the kingdom. And the fact that Aaron is included in the tradition further indicated that he inaugurated a cult whose priesthood resided at Bethel for, according to Judg. 20:27f., Phinehas, Aaron's grandson belonged to that priesthood. It was natural for Aaron to play the chief role in the aetiology on which the cult of the calf-image at Bethel was based. It may well have been that the cult did have its beginnings on Sinai.

¹⁰¹S. E. Loewenstamm, "The Making and Destruction of the Golden Calf," Biblica, XLVIII, no 4 (1967), 481-90; "The Making and Destruction of the Golden Calf--A Rejoinder," Biblica, LVI (1975), 330-343; and "The Ugaritic Fertility Myth--the Result of a Mistranslation," Israel Exploration Journal, XII (1962), 87-88.

In these he directed attention to a problem in the text which had concerned exegetes for centuries and proposed what must be the most satisfying solution to the dilemma of the destruction of the golden calf. Loewenstamm was the first to recognize a similarity in the formulae of the calf's destruction (Exod. 32:20) and the death of Mot in the Ba'al-Mot tablet of Ugarit. The now obvious parallels which exist between these two epics have far-reaching effects for our understanding of the Exodus narrative that it behooves us to spell out the consequences of Loewenstamm's study in some detail.

Interestingly the results emerged from a different consideration altogether. Prior to Loewenstamm's work, debate raged as to the nature of the conflict between Ba'al and Mot. The popular thesis was that the narrative reflected a fertility myth in which the perpetual tension between fertility and drought was re-enacted in terms of a celestial struggle.¹⁰² However

¹⁰²E.g. J. Gray, The Legacy of Canaan: The Ras Shamra Texts and Their relevance to the Old Testament (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1957), p. 46; see also V. Jacobs & I. R. Jacobs, "The Myth of Mot and 'Al'eyan Ba'al," Harvard Theological Review, XXXVIII (1945), 77-109. These latter writers insisted that Mot was not so much representative of the drought (that dubious distinction belonged to 'Athtar) as it was of the corn (p. 79). As corn, Mot was 'harvested' by 'Anat who thereby absolved humanity of all responsibility for the outrages against Mot (p. 98).

there were some scholars who were plainly opposed to the suggestion that the Ba'al-Mot cycle represented an agricultural myth. Cyrus Gordon believed that the idea of Ba'al being killed by Mot with the onslaught of summer drought and revived with the return of the rains was arrived at, a priori, from Greek mythology.¹⁰³ Gordon's reference was to the Adonis myth when Zeus settled the rivalry between Persephone and Aphrodite by assigning parts of the year to each.

Before the discovery of the Ugaritic texts, this Greek version was read back into Phoenician mythology and now it is read still further back into Ugaritic mythology in clear opposition to the plain meaning of the Ugaritic texts. The texts tell us nothing of any annual death and revival of Baal.¹⁰⁴

A later antagonist to the seasonal theory was Umberto Cassuto who insisted that

...it is hard to suppose that an epic of such large and comprehensive proportions, so rich in colourful episodes in stories of all kinds, which presents us with a whole assortment of gods and heroes, monsters and beasts, and depicts a bewildering variety of battles and quarrels, conversations and banquets, creatures and buildings, is no more than an allegory of a single, clearly defined natural phenomenon such as that of the drying up of vegetation in the hot summer and its renewal in the rainy season. The concept must be much broader than that.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³C. H. Gordon, Ugaritic Literature: A Comprehensive Translation of the Poetic and Prose Texts (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1949).

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁵U. Cassuto, "Baal and Mot in the Ugaritic Texts," Israel Exploration Journal, XII (1962), 79.

Cassuto was arguing that although the nature myth might be one element in the complex narrative, it could not be considered the only one, for there were several features which did not fit into the neat schema of the seasonal motif.¹⁰⁶ The narrative reflected rather a struggle of cosmic dimensions. On the one hand, Mot was regarded as the god of death, "the symbol and personification of the powers of destruction and dissolution, of all those manifold forces that are opposed to life."¹⁰⁷ By contrast, Ba'al was the god of life, "the personification of the life-giving, life-preserving and life-renewing forces."¹⁰⁸ The two protagonists were opposites and their conflict symbolic of the awesome struggle between the forces of life and death.

It was in attempting to corroborate this view that Loewenstamm recognized a similarity with the Exodus account. He had argued that the Ugaritic verb drʿ, usually translated "to sow" by those subscribing to the idea of a seasonal myth, more properly carried the meaning "to scatter" and therefore Mot's remains were not

¹⁰⁶Ibid. Some of these features include the significance of Mot's flesh being eaten by the birds, the co-existence of Baal and Mot after the latter's resurrection, the reference of the seed being sown in the sea which cannot imply a symbol of fertility and the facts that it took Baal 7 years to overcome Mot and that Baal's death lasted 7 years.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 84.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 85.

sown as such, but scattered.¹⁰⁹ As a consequence, Loewenstamm insisted that the cycle could not be considered a fertility myth a priori, and rather than Mot being a symbol of grain which was sown by 'Anat, the phrase bšd tdr'nn could be best understood in terms of Mot's body being scattered in a field. In this context the scattering would have represented a symbol of utter destruction. Indeed, each of the verbs in the Ugaritic myth which recounted 'Anat's battle with Mot could be considered means of total obliteration, viz. burning (šrp), grinding (tḥn) and scattering (dr'). And since there were also three verbs used in the narrative of the destruction of the golden calf, the similarity between the texts might indicate that in the Canaanite and Biblical worlds the same kind of mutilation and obliteration of a hostile god was prescribed.

Another brief, but significant article appeared shortly after Loewenstamm's discovery.¹¹⁰ In it, Fensham raised the question of the purpose of the Israelites drinking the solution of gold in water (Exod. 32:20b). A number of scholars both ancient and modern, had believed it to have been an allusion to the ordeal of

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See Loewenstamm's discussion of the verb dr' in "The Ugaritic Fertility Myth--the Result of a Mis-translation," loc. cit. Obviously dr' cannot possibly mean "sow" in the Ugaritic text: 'lk pht dr' bym.

110 F. C. Fensham, "The Burning of the Golden Calf and Ugaritic," Israel Exploration Journal, XVI (1966), 191-3.

לִי הַזָּרִים in Num. 5. However, in view of Loewenstamm's insights on the biblical passage, Fensham was convinced that the phenomenon was not an ordeal in which the nation's guilt was determined, for the people had already been declared guilty (Exod. 32:7-14). Instead, since in the epic of Ugarit the eating of Mot's remains could be considered an integral part of the motif of entire annihilation of the dread object, it was feasible that the purpose of Moses' demand that the people drink the gold solution was similar. That is to say in the manner in which Mot was destroyed by burning, grinding, scattering and eating so that all traces of him were removed, so Israel's golden calf was similarly removed without trace.

The obvious implication of all this was to clarify the discussion on the nature of calf, whether it was made of wood, gold, wood-plated with gold or gold on a wood pedestal. From the perspective of the destruction of the calf, the question of composition was immaterial. The formula used in Exod. 32:20 to describe its mutilation was according to Fensham "a fixed ritual act."¹¹¹ And merely indicated that the Exodus tradition was probably of a very early date.

¹¹¹ It seems to the present writer that Fensham must mean a fixed ritual formula since by virtue of the fact that the different operations employed in destroying the image are incompatible, it is hardly likely that a ritual act could emulate the different aspects of annihilation.

Concern about the composition of the calf had occupied scholarly minds since the eleventh century exegete. Ibn Jannah expressed doubt in understanding קרש in terms of burning. He had noted that gold melted and did not burn.¹¹² Abarbanel, in the fifteenth century and Bochartus in the seventeenth¹¹³ were among others who had sought explanations for the incongruous use of the term קרש. We have already alluded to many of the ideas proposed to explicate the enigmas of the calf's destruction in our earlier discussion. Broadly speaking, there had been three major theories. The first had suggested that the image was an amalgam of wood and gold. Either the molten calf had been placed on a wooden pedestal¹¹⁴ or the core of the idol had consisted of wood which had been overlaid with gold.¹¹⁵ The supposition was that verses 4 and 24, which relate the making of the calf, referred only to the image's gold overlay whereas verse

¹¹²Jonah Ibn Jannah, Sefer Hariqma (Jerusalem: 1964), p. 308, cited by S. E. Loewenstamm, "The Making and Destruction of the Golden Calf," op. cit., p. 481.

¹¹³See Loewenstamm's discussion, *ibid.*, pp. 481f.

¹¹⁴E.g. M. Noth, *Exodus*, op. cit.

¹¹⁵E.g. J. O. Michaelis, Deutsche Übersetzung des Alten Testaments mit Anmerkungen für Ungelehrte, Der dritte Teil (Göttingen: 1771), pp. 99-103; W. F. Hezel, Die Bibel Alten und Neuen Testaments mit Vollständig--erklärenden Anmerkungen, Erster Teil (Lemgo: 1780), pp. 422-425. Both cited by S. E. Loewenstamm, loc. cit.

20 which describes its destruction, focused upon the wooden parts of the idol.

The second alternative theory had insisted on the calf being made of molten gold without wooden components. The inherent difficulties in this idea have already been outlined. One was faced with the enigma of an image which could be burned, ground and scattered, not to mention its residue floating on the water for the people to drink. Lehming's utilization of the results of higher critical paradigms represented a third way out of the dilemma. Lehming had postulated two traditions, one of a golden calf and the other, a more original wooden calf. It had seemed evident to him that verse 20 reflected the more ancient tradition and verses 4a and 24 later modifications and accertions. However, Loewenstamm highlighted a major flaw in Lehming's hypothesis:

This explanation...fails to account for the same difficulty...in the Deuteronomic parallel of the story which is a manifestly homogeneous composition and yet explicitly states that Moses burned a calf of molten gold (Deut. 9:16, 21).¹¹⁶

The impasse was surmounted by means of Loewenstamm's contention that the Ugaritic epic texts dealing with the killing of Mot paralleled the biblical material of Exod. 32:20 and allowed for similarity of meaning. As 'Anat seized Mot, she cleaved him with a sword, burnt him with fire, ground his body with millstones and

¹¹⁶S. E. Loewenstamm, op. cit., p. 482.

strewed his flesh upon the field. The remains of Mot's body was consumed by birds. It was obviously the intention of the narrator to depict Mot's complete destruction "by employing a certain series of tangible images, regardless of whether the different images employed were realistically compatible."¹¹⁷

The parallels between the biblical accounts and those of Ugarit are immediately evident. In each the body is first described as being burnt (ḡṛṣ) and then ground (ḡṛṣ). The scattering of the calf upon the water is similar in kind to Mot's remains being strewn upon the field and upon the sea in the two Ugaritic versions. And the Israelites drinking the solution of gold dust in water in the Exodus account is reminiscent of the birds consuming the remains of Mot.¹¹⁸ One must conclude, therefore, that the intent to depict the utter annihilation in the Ba'al-Mot Ugaritic cycle is also inherent in

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 484. It is clear that Mot's body could not have been eaten after it had already been burned and ground to ash.

¹¹⁸ It is feasible that the Deuteronomist excluded the detail of the people drinking the water (cf. Exod. 32:20) because of a concern to portray the body of water as a "brook that descended from the mountain" (Deut. 9:21). In being more realistic he observed that the dust would have been carried away too quickly to allow the people to drink. And if Exod. 32:20 is to be considered an ancient literary form, then one cannot take the detail of drinking too seriously. To do so would be doing a great injustice to the text. Both accounts are concerned to emphasize the image's utter eradication. Each adopted a different way to express it.

the story of the golden calf's destruction. The writer of the Exodus account had adopted an ancient literary form and graphically described Moses' treatment of the image. Whether or not one or more of the processes was employed to destroy the calf is not a pertinent question. Rather, it is obvious that the method described in its entirety in Exod. 32:20 cannot be considered a realistic picture. All we can be certain of is that the golden calf was destroyed without trace. To insist on more from verse 20 is to impose upon the text a meaning which was not implied by the original writer.

Turning his attention to the calf's construction, Loewenstamm argued that no contradiction existed in the two accounts of verses 4 and 24. It was perfectly feasible, he suggested, in ancient thought for the calf to be produced both by Aaron and by itself. In this assertion, Loewenstamm utilized the findings of earlier scholars of the Midrashic era.¹¹⁹ His contention was that verses 4, 24 and 20 did not need to belong to different sources a priori. If they were understood aright, that is to say within the literary milieu of the ancient Near East, one of the major criteria for attributing them to different authors was removed. We have already noted that the phenomenon of contradiction was the one most frequently employed in a critical appraisal of

¹¹⁹For a fuller discussion of this theory see C. E. Loewenstamm, op. cit., pp. 485-490.

Exod. 32 to define sources within the material. Loewenstamm's thesis suggested that no anomalous tensions existed between the three descriptions of the calf's construction or annihilation. Indeed, he went further to indicate that he believed verses 4, 24 and 20 formed part of a literal homogenous account.

Undoubtedly, Loewenstamm's most significant achievement was to uncover the Ugaritic parallel with Exod. 32:20. The enigma of the composition was finally resolved and the theory of an original wooden calf exposed to be wholly without foundation. Verse 20 had nothing to contribute to any hypothesis on the calf's composition.

Opposition to Loewenstamm's thesis came in the form of an article by L. G. Perdue,¹²⁰ a student of J. P. Hyatt. In the tradition of his many predecessors, Perdue insisted that the composite nature of Exod. 32 was such as to rule out the possibility of the accounts of the construction or destruction of the calf being homogeneous a priori. The different strands within the material indicated two ways in which Moses learned of the apostasy (vv 7f. and 17ff.), two different descriptions of Moses' intercession (vv 11ff. and 30ff.) and a variety of consequences of the apostasy (vv 14, 20, 24, 34, and 35). And contradictions abounded over the

¹²⁰L. G. Perdue, "The Making and Destruction of the Golden Calf--A Reply," Biblica, LIV (1973), 237-246.

responsibility of who made the image. Verses 1-6 seemed to indicate that Aaron constructed it whereas verses 8 and 20 implied that the people made it and verse 35 suggested both were responsible. By contrast, verse 24 could be understood to mean that the image emerged of its own account. The enigma of who was responsible for the calf's construction predisposed one to exclude the possibility of homogeneity between the sections of the chapter which related the calf's construction and destruction.

Perdue insisted that the parallels between Exod. 32:20 and the Ba'al-Mot Ugaritic cycle was not as striking as Loewenstamm implied. It was true, admitted Perdue, that a few similar verbs appeared in each, but these had to be understood in the context of several verbs which had no correspondence. The Ugaritic verbs ahd (seize), bq^c (cleave) and 'kl (eat) did not occur in the Exodus account and the two Hebrew verbs ṣṣṭ (to crush, pulverise) and ṣṣ (cause to drink) exhibited no parallels in the Ugaritic epic. Perdue also questioned Loewenstamm's contention that ṣṣṭ (scatter) corresponded to dr^c (to scatter, sow). The basic issue in the discussion, however, revolved around the nature of the Ugaritic myth. And in this Perdue exhibited some naïvety in not taking seriously enough the objections raised by Loewenstamm, Cassuto and others concerning the association of the myth with a fertility ritual. The

fact that the myth recounted a seven year cycle rather than an annual one seemed to preclude a correspondence with a grain harvest. Secondly, he proposed that Exod. 32:20 represented "the annihilation of a cultic image (or base) of an antagonistic deity told in concrete language approximating that of the Deuteronomic school."¹²¹ That was to say that the destruction of the golden calf was presented in realistic language. But we have already noted the obvious difficulties in considering an entity burnt, ground and scattered. One cannot doubt that the narrator did not mean that the two processes of annihilation by burning and grinding were mutually compatible. To attach to them realistic significance was to impose upon the text an understanding which the original writer could not have intended.

As recently as 1975, Loewenstamm countered Perdue's argumentation.¹²² It was true, he admitted, that a number of dissimilarities exist between the Ugaritic and the Exodus account but he accused Perdue of emphasizing these to the detriment of the great many parallels. Loewenstamm asserted that to suggest verses 4, 20 and 24 belonged to the same source was not to deny the complicated pre-history of Exod. 32. Indeed he argued that the chapter was made up of two originally unconnected

¹²¹Ibid., p. 243.

¹²²S. E. Loewenstamm, "The Making and Destruction of the Golden Calf--A Rejoinder," loc. cit.

aetiological traditions, one of a golden calf and the other of a second set of law tables:

The contrast between God, Moses and the divine tablets on the one hand, and Aaron, the people and the calf on the other hand, is crystal clear and Moses' counteraction nullifying the worship of the calf is motivated with logical and dramatic force...Two straightforward aetiological stories relating the creation of existing cult objects were turned into an intimate narration of their intertwined making....¹²³

But Loewenstamm was quick to point out that statements regarding Aaron as builder of the calf (verses 2-5, 21-24) and those making the people responsible (verses 8, 35a) were reconcilable since Aaron had acted in response to the nation's request, with the people's aid and on their behalf. The outlook of these respective passages were similar. It may well be that the latter units attributing responsibility to the people for the calf were later additions to the golden calf story as was the Levitical aetiology (vv 25-29). But these were adapted to the story of the calf as the tradition emerged into full narrative form. Aaron was depicted as bowing to the people's demand to construct an image and then attempting to rectify the situation by proclaiming a feast to YHWH (v 5). Thereafter the future high priest's activity atrophied and the focus shifted on to the people. Moses broke the tablets, destroyed the calf, called Aaron

¹²³Ibid., pp. 332-333.

to account and had the chief sinners punished. Tradition-historical criticism posited numerous layers of aetiological and polemical tradition, but Loewenstamm maintained that the literary analysis of Exod. 32 suggested "the hand of one and the same author who welded together different elements into one clearly organized composition."¹²⁴

With the affinities with Ugarit established, one could more knowledgeably tackle the problem of dating and authorship of the narrative. It is not likely that Israel borrowed the language and expressions of Ugarit directly. The Canaanite location was some distance away and the difficulty involved in deciphering and studying those ancient pagan writings undoubtedly made them inaccessible to the Hebrews who probably lacked the motivation to uncover the Ugaritic myths anyway. Rather, it was Loewenstamm's thesis that the specific parallels between the two literatures were explained in terms of common ground underlying the literatures of all Canaanite peoples.¹²⁵ This could possibly make the literatures somewhat contemporaneous and evidence that the tradition embodied in Exod. 32:20 and possibly verses 4 and 24 also is very ancient.

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 336.

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 341.

W. F. Albright has postulated that the entire chapter of Exod. 32 is of a very early origin.¹²⁶ Utilizing the findings of Loewenstamm, he alluded to verse 20 as one indication of the chapter's archaisms. Verses 17, 22 and 25 indicated others. These verses contain the rather obscure derivatives of the stems ברע and פרע. However it was the poetic fragment of verse 18 which illustrated most significantly an extremely archaic structure which Albright dated contemporaneously with Exod. 15 in the 13th century B.C. He argued that the repetitive parallelism displayed in the narrative of the golden calf was characteristic of the early date.¹²⁷ And, as in Exod. 15:11, the two original beats of qôlu ghannôti had been reduced to one by the loss of the vocalic endings, hence qôl 'annôt.

These conclusions regarding the date of material were arrived at by Huesman also in his commentary of 1968. He argued that the bull image would have been "well known to the Israelites either in the 13th century or in the

¹²⁶W. F. Albright, Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths (London: Athlone Press, 1968), p. 38.

¹²⁷Albright cites Judg. 15:16 as another example of this archaic structure, *ibid.*, p. 19. In arguing for an exact parallel of each aspect of the tricolon, Albright prefers the renderings of the LXX and the Syriac versions which include the extra term (οἶνον) to balance the cola.

time of the monarchy, for it represented Apis in the Egyptian pantheon and Baal among the Canaanites."¹²⁸

Despite the somewhat inconclusive discussions on the dating of the material, the contribution made by Loewenstamm in uncovering the meaning of Exod. 32:20 through comparative linguistic study was certainly a significant one. It issues a challenge to any traditio-historian who saw in the narrative of the destruction of the golden calf the elements of two distinct aetiological motifs--one of a wooden calf and the other of a golden calf. Loewenstamm's contention that the Exodus passage revealed both a unity and a progression of events should make it imperative that the basic precepts of the various critical paradigms concerning Exod. 32 be re-examined. The disappointment has been that few scholars in the few years since Loewenstamm's publication have utilized much of his work. Indeed there has been a tendency to resort to earlier traditio-historical conclusions seemingly oblivious to the challenge that Loewenstamm has levelled at the basic principles on which the theories were founded! It is too early to accurately assess the importance of Loewenstamm's discovery. Generations of commentators still to come will decide what use, if any, to make of it.

¹²⁸J. E. Huesman, "Exodus," The Jerome Biblical Commentary, I (London, Dublin & Melbourne: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), p. 64.

Before continuing further in this survey on the present decade of study of the golden calf, it will be helpful to summarize the achievements of major critical movements as they bear upon the narrative of Exod. 32. In understanding the main forces affecting biblical hermeneutics in the last century, one can better comprehend and evaluate more recent innovations in a study of the scriptures. It may enable one also to ascertain the direction future exegesis will take.

The modern critical era had "come of age" with the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis which attributed to the Pentateuch a composition made up of four basic narrative sources: the J document (c. 850 B.C.), the E document (c. 750 B.C.), the Deuteronomic Code (621 B.C.) and the Priestly Code (398 B.C.). The emphasis of the now familiar JEDP hypothesis was upon the evolutionary nature not only of the literary origins of the Pentateuch, but of Israel's religious development as well. Although the Old Testament period witnessed an early period of oral traditions, the Wellhausen school indicated that the major sources comprising the Pentateuch often reflected later stages in Israel's religious development which had been read back into the pre-prophetical traditions.

Despite a certain amount of discontent with the Graf-Wellhausen model and an impressive number of modifications to the JEDP scheme, no satisfactory alternative was suggested to displace it from its position of

supremacy in biblical hermeneutics. Nevertheless the symbols underwent metamorphosis in that they came to represent streams of traditions which eventually merged into 'sources.' And since later 'sources' contained some early traditions while late traditions found their way into the earlier 'sources,' the whole Pentateuchal picture took on a greater complexity. The JEDP symbols remained fashionable, but their meaning experienced a shift in emphasis. The need had developed to go behind the source documents to a scrutiny of the traditions which they contained. Some scholars such as Pedersen and Engnell believed the traditions reflected cultic myths and legends which were revealed in the ritual of Israel's worship and wanted to abandon the JEDP scheme altogether. Others, among them, von Rad, attempted to retain the documentary symbols and yet postulated the credal confessions of Deut. 25:5b-9; 6:20-24; and Josh. 24:2b-13 etc. as the basic kernel of the Pentateuch. These credos represented a summary of Israel's theological belief. With Noth, they experienced reinterpretation and expansion such that out of them grew the five great themes of the Pentateuch: Promises to the Patriarchs; Exodus from Egypt; Sinai Revelation; Wilderness Wanderings; Entry into Canaan. Of these Moses was indigenous to only the Wilderness theme. Both the Sinai and Patriarchs themes were later additions.

One of the leading exponents of this form-critical approach to the Exodus narrative in recent days was G. W. Coats. In a study of the Wilderness traditions, Coats suggested that Exod. 32 ought to be understood as part of the murmuring motif which was integral to the Wilderness theme.¹²⁹ And yet, because it was obviously part of the Sinai story, he deduced that the Sinai theme must have joined the Exodus-Wilderness-Conquest complex at an early stage. Relying heavily on Martin Noth's earlier commentary, Coats divided the passage in a recognizable manner and attributed the thrust of the story to J. Acknowledging Exod. 32's dependence upon I Kgs. 12, he argued that the latter did not represent an innovation but a restitution of an older cultic order which involved the worship of calves. The worship of calves had existed in Dan and Bethel prior to the divided monarchy. Jeroboam simply recognized that cult as a legitimate expression of Yahwism. The act of building the golden calf, he suggested, was not intended to replace YHWH but was an attempt to establish "a new focal point for his authority."¹³⁰ In the context of Exod. 32, the episode of the calf reflected a polemic against the Jeroboamic calves at Dan and Bethel, but Coats perceived that much

¹²⁹G. W. Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness: The Murmuring Motif in the Wilderness Traditions of the Old Testament (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), pp. 184ff.

¹³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 188.

more than this was involved. The 'apostasy' disrupted the important covenant motif in the book of Exodus and was intentionally depicted as an abrogation of YHWH's covenant with Israel.¹³¹

The most recent method of Pentateuchal study, we have seen, has been the traditio-historical approach. We have looked already at several exponents of this critical model, outstanding among them being Lehming and Beyerlin. Davies summarized their method thus:

This approach seeks to set forth the history of tradition, the process of growth by which a story or a string of stories achieves its final form. Grammatical and syntactical features, the choice of words and the style of diction are the raw materials of the approach. All these, interpreted in the light of polemical, theological and tendentious attitudes, shape the material until it achieves its final editing. The comparative study of similar units is the strength of this approach as the subjective criteria of its exponents are very often its weakness.¹³²

The ability to get behind the present form of the text to the underlying traditions was an extremely useful one. It had been obvious to both Lehming and Beyerlin that Exod. 32 was in large part a reflection of a polemic against the ancient Israelite cults of the northern sanctuaries. That is to say when Jeroboam ratified the worship of the calves at Dan and Bethel, a precedent to condemn the calf-cult was established by the creation of an incident involving the veneration of a golden calf at

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²G. H. Davies, op. cit., p. 27.

Sinai which was clearly apostate. It may well have been that this was not a creation ex nihilo. The evidence suggested that Jeroboam had not inaugurated the worship of calves, but that a form of such worship had been in existence prior to the period of the divided monarchy and might possibly have originated at Sinai. The important consideration concerned the nature of the ancient cult. The consensus of opinion indicated that the golden calf was an early expression of Yahwism and that the calf represented a pedestal on which the invisible YHWH sat.¹³³

A recent attempt to indicate otherwise was made in an article by Bailey.¹³⁴ He believed that the golden

¹³³Cf. W. F. Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity (New York: John Hopkins Press, 1957), pp. 298ff.; H. Obbink, "Jahwebilder," ZAW, XLVII (1929), 264-279; W. Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, I (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), pp. 115ff.; O. Eissfeldt, "Lade und Stierbild," ZAW, LVIII (1940-41), 190ff.; R. de Vaux, Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1951), pp. 333-334; M. Buber, Moses (London: East & West Library, 1946), pp. 148-9; M. Noth, Exodus, op. cit., p. 247; History of Israel (New York & Evanston: Harper & Row Publishers, 1958), p. 233; J. Gray, Kings (London: S.C.M. Press Ltd., 19), p. 290; Y. Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile (London: Geo. Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1961), p. 271; W. J. Harrelson, "Golden Calf," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, I (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), pp. 488-489. See also discussions in Appendix E.

¹³⁴L. R. Bailey, "The Golden Calf," Hebrew Union College Annual, XLII (1971), 97-115.

calf represented a return to a very ancient cultic form of worship in the pre-Yahwistic period before the tribes had merged into the amphictyonic system of Israel and before YHWH had been equated with the God of the Fathers. Since, it seemed, the tribes of Israel learned only of Yahwism at Sinai, prior to that time each clan venerated its own cultic object. According to Bailey it was the Joseph clan which engaged in the worship of a lunar deity which was symbolically represented in the form of a calf. He deduced this largely on the basis of the theophoric names associated with lunar gods prior to the Mosaic Age. He quoted the examples of Têrāh (Têr being the designation for moon-god) and Laban. Bailey also pointed out that the clan was associated with Ur and Harran both centres for the cults of astral deities. Since the moon-god, Nannar was described as a bull in Ur and as the "bull of heaven,"¹³⁵ and since golden calves were used as harp frames and since sacred cattle were kept at the temple of Nannar and since golden oxen were dedicated to the gods Nigal and Sîn and since the bull was considered the sacred animal of the moon-god in S. Arabia, later Babylonia, Palmyra, Egypt, the Graeco-Roman Empire and mediaeval Harran and India, and since two bulls were sacrificed in Israel to the new moon at the start of the year and at each month (Num. 28:11, 14) it was apparent

¹³⁵Ibid., pp. 112-3.

that the golden calf of Exod. 32 could have represented a moon-god. Bailey suggested that the Aaronide calf was no pedestal on which an invisible YHWH sat, but represented an altogether different deity! In Moses' absence on Sinai, the people had reverted to an old form of the worship of the God of the Fathers. That cult had seemingly survived to the Mosaic Age and beyond--to the collapse of the northern kingdom.¹³⁶

For the purposes of the present survey the picture of contemporary biblical criticism was perhaps completed in Jose Loza's article on the role of Rje in Exod. 32.¹³⁷ Loza departed from the literary analyses of parts of the chapter over the vast majority of years that have made up the critical era in biblical studies. Disregarding the popular opinion that verses 7-14 were secondary and Deuteronomic in origin and nature, Loza argued thoroughly and from the minutiae of detailed philological and linguistic study that this commonly assigned Deuteronomic passage was earlier than formerly believed and not only did not depend upon the Deut. 9 account but was the more original. In so doing he was reverting to a thesis proposed at first by Wellhausen.

¹³⁶Ibid., p. 114, n. 113.

¹³⁷J. Loza, "Exode XXXII et La Redaction JE," Vetus Testamentum, XXIII (1973), 31-55.

While Loza affirmed many of the conclusions arrived at by source criticism back at the beginning of the critical epoch, stirrings were afoot on both sides of the Atlantic to undermine the basic tenets of critical paradigms. In Germany Rolf Rendtorff accused source criticism of having become "a highly esoteric game,"¹³⁸ while in America, Walter Wink's indictment has been that "historical biblical criticism is bankrupt."¹³⁹ This latter reaction against critical orthodoxy is clearly an overstatement and, one suspects, is simply a dramatized way of preparing the ground for the restructuring of biblical exegesis along existential lines which Wink espouses.

Rendtorff, by contrast, approaching the biblical material from the perspective of tradition-history, has demanded a new analysis of the Pentateuch distinct from the source critical paradigms of J, E, D and P. These, he has argued, have become too diffuse and amorphous and impossible to define with any degree of accuracy. While literary critics agree about the existence of the four major documents, they show "a wide disagreement when it comes to details about their scope, date, characteristics

¹³⁸B. W. Anderson, "Book Review of R. Rendtorff's *Das Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Problem des Pentateuch*," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XL, No. 1 (Jan., 1978), 101.

¹³⁹W. Wink, The Bible in Human Transformation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), p. 1.

and general literary and religious aims."¹⁴⁰ Such disparities between the findings of literary critics have unquestionably given cause for disquiet among Old Testament scholars for some time. Rendtorff has simply verbalized an observation shared, it seems, by many that "the champions of the documentary hypothesis are living in a ruined house and that they have been living in it so long that they fail to notice its ruinous condition."¹⁴¹

Nevertheless even if the weak points of the four-document hypothesis have been apparent, to date it still appears to be a better working hypothesis than any other which has yet been devised. It is much more easy to criticize that it is to construct. Literary critics themselves would concede the weaknesses of some of their arguments, the vagueness of criteria of style and the inconclusive nature of delimiting sources on the basis of vocabulary usage. One must also admit that 'the assured results' of higher criticism have been peddled in too assertive a way. The result has been that it is made to explain more of the material than it is really able to do.

There is scarcely a significant verse of the Pentateuch which is left out of reckoning in

¹⁴⁰R. E. Clements, "Review of R. Rendtorff's Das Überlieferungs geschichtliche Problem des Pentateuch," Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, III (1977), 47.

¹⁴¹W. McKane, "Review of R. Rendtorff's Das Überlieferungs geschichtliche Problem des Pentateuch," Vetus Testamentum, XXVIII (1978), 371.

its ascription to one or other of the major documents, even when little in the way of direct evidential support exists to support this.¹⁴²

Yet it is precisely Rendtorff's attempt to move beyond a mere criticism of the documentary hypothesis to construct another critical paradigm that commends his significant theorizing to our study. In discounting the existence of unifying sources within the Pentateuch, and in particular the Yahwistic source, Rendtorff distinguishes within the material large unit "complexes" each of which is self-contained and wholly unrelated to the others. Such complexes include Patriarchal history, the Exodus tradition, the Wilderness Wandering, the Settlement and the Sinai story.

Now, whereas von Rad wanted to understand the Pentateuch as a unified work, compiled, edited and given a strong theological motivation by the Yahwist, Rendtorff did not find traces of theological or linguistic comparability neither in the material in the different complexes itself nor in the editing process within the complexes. That is to say that each complex was so self-explanatory that it had little direct literary relationship to what followed. The patriarchal history formed an entirely separate work which did not anticipate the subsequent stories of the oppression in Egypt, the exodus event, or the revelation on Mount Sinai. Each complex not only

¹⁴²R. E. Clements, "Review of R. Rendtorff," op. cit., p. 48.

dealt self-sufficiently with its own subject matter but possessed its own redactional structure. In every way, it stood adequately and autonomously on its own. It had its own history of literary development apart from the rest of the Pentateuch up until the seventh century B.C. A recognition of this is vital to a proper understanding of Rendtorff's thesis. For, if it can be demonstrated that the large literary complexes grew up independently of each other until later times, there can have been no compilation or editing done by a J- or an E-source of more than one complex. Otherwise one complex would indicate an affinity of knowledge of another complex.

Rendtorff proceeded to illustrate, with reference to the divine promise speeches in Genesis 12-36, that the patriarchal history stood as a distinct entity from the pre-priestly material in Exodus and Numbers for the theological point of view expressed in the promise speeches do not extend beyond Genesis 12-36 and the book of Exodus betrays an ignorance of the promise theme.

The redactional connecting pieces of the Pentateuch which brought the large complexes together, according to Rendtorff's schema, are Deuteronomic in character. That is to say that both the latest redaction of the individual complexes in the Pentateuch and their eventual combination into a whole is related to the Deuteronomic formation of tradition late in the seventh

century B.C. Indeed, Rendtorff will not assign any comprehensive redaction of the Pentateuch to the pre-Deuteronomic period.¹⁴³ Hans Schmid in two of his recent works¹⁴⁴ accords with Rendtorff's ideas on this late date for this strategic redaction of the Pentateuch, although whereas Schmid wants to move the J material into the near vicinity of the Deuteronomic tradition, Rendtorff wants to deny the existence of a Yahwist at all.

The importance of this discussion for the present study is clearly apparent. Rendtorff has sought to demonstrate that each of the great complexes of Pentateuchal tradition has its own theological tendency. Exodus 32 is therefore less a composite of sources as it is an admixture of traditions combining a backward glance at the departure from Egypt, the promise of land, the redemptive acts of YHWH on behalf of the people and the tradition of Moses' leadership.¹⁴⁵ The apostasy of the

¹⁴³R. Rendtorff, "Pentateuchal Studies on the Move," Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, III (1977), 43.

¹⁴⁴H. H. Schmid, Der sogenannte Jahwist: Beobachtungen und Fragen zur Pentateuchforschung (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1976) and "In Search of New Approaches in Pentateuchal Research," Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, III (1977), 33-42.

¹⁴⁵R. Rendtorff, Das Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Problem des Pentateuch (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977), pp. 72, 78, 90.

golden calf is considered to be essentially part of the independent complex known as the Sinai pericope. Yet it contains allusions to the exodus event (cf. verses 1, 4, 7, 8, 11 and 23) and includes a reference to the patriarchal promise of land in verse 13.

To take Rendtorff's and Schmid's theses seriously would be to suppose that Exod. 32 is preponderantly a deuteronomic composition which contains the kernel of a tradition emerging from a "Sinai complex."¹⁴⁶ That such a proposal adequately deals with the complexity of the material of Exodus 32 is, it seems, open to a great many questions. One wonders that by defining deuteronomic in such broad and loose terms, if it does not become a mere "catch-all for ideas that are common to many parts of the Old Testament."¹⁴⁷ And since Rendtorff has confined himself in his study to Genesis 12-36 and obtained relatively clear results, one needs to be cautious of translating such results to other more complex pericopae. For example, Coats has pointed out that whereas the distinction between the patriarchs and the exodus might be an obvious one, that between the exodus theme and the wilderness theme is not so clear-cut, and may not be, in fact, originally distinct.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶Cf. G. Wenham, "Review of H. H. Schmid's Der sogenannte Jahwist: Beobachtungen und Fragen zur Pentateuchforschung," Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, III (1977), 58.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁴⁸G. W. Coats, "The Yahwist as Theologian? A

Rendtorff's hypothesis cannot be embraced without difficulty and only time will tell whether or not he has sounded the death-toll for the documentary hypothesis and the demise of the Yahwist theologian. In some ways it seems, the Deuteronomic compiler has simply replaced the Yahwist for, as Clements has suggested, the kind of criteria by which Rendtorff has established the Deuteronomic characteristics of the material are precisely the criteria about which he is skeptical when applied to the case for a Yahwist (viz. vocabulary and theological viewpoint).¹⁴⁹ If this is so, the question for a compilation date becomes one of merely sooner or later, and if later one then must deal with Clements' observation:

...it is hard to become convinced that the very isolation and self-sufficiency of the "larger units" of tradition, particularly of the exodus and wilderness, could have survived for so long without the existence of a framework with which to hold them in place in relation to each other.¹⁵⁰

A Summary

By way of summary it is clearly apparent that biblical studies have come a long way in the century and more that have marked the critical era. As a consequence, one's understanding of the narrative of the golden calf has progressed enormously. One is aware of the composite nature of the text translated by centuries of oral and written traditions before reaching the extant form in which one has it today. Unfortunately, the

Critical Reflection, "Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, III (1977), 30.

¹⁴⁹R. E. Clements, "Review of R. Rendtorff," op. cit., p. 51.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., p. 53.

component parts of Exodus 32 have not allowed themselves to be easily allocated to sources or traditions. The chapter lacks concrete philological and syntactical evidence to provide one with clues of source identity. These can only be surmised on the basis of a comparison with similar-type material elsewhere in the Pentateuch. At the forefront of that task has stood the diligent work of Beyerlin who attributes most of the material in Exodus 32 to a northern Ephraimite source. It is the opinion of the present investigator that Beyerlin's work in gathering and defining source data for the chapter has not been bettered and if one must decide between the hands of the Yahwist and the Elohist, Beyerlin's thesis stands as one to be reckoned with.

Let it be conceded, however, that the evidence is not conclusive enough to allow one to make an E determination with a strong degree of confidence. Perhaps one can say no more than Exodus 32 embodies old Epic tradition (JE) to which have been added later Deuteronomic accretions. Even this latter statement is a questionable one for criteria to enable us to define either vv. 7-14 or 25-29 as Deuteronomic are missing.¹⁵¹

The dilemma one constantly faces in attempting to assign the component parts of Exodus 32 to their respective sources is the grave absence of inherent

¹⁵¹See earlier discussion, p. 250 , n. 94.

philological criteria to aid one's understanding of the nature of the composition of the passage. Those that do exist were dealt with most adequately by Dillmann and many of his philological conclusions have remained unchallenged. But the evidence is not overwhelming enough to encourage us towards an assurance in our results. Nevertheless, despite these limitations imposed upon us by the text, it is probable that the chapter reflects a composite nature.

The formula in verse 4 אלה אלהיך ישראל betrays a modification made by a later hand to reflect the more appropriate plural rendering of II Kgs. 12:28 and establish a precedent for condemning the Jeroboamic calves at Dan and Bethel. Several of the anomalies already discussed at length are further indicators of compositeness. In this regard, however, one needs to be conscious of the fact, as Driver has pointed out, that some of the anomalies are more apparent than real. In the attempt to discover contradictions in the text, one must be careful not to overlook the feasible explanations of many of the ancients and some in the modern era of the calibre of C.F. Keil, Murphy and Kalisch.

The contribution of traditio-historical criticism has been a significant one and has afforded further insight into the diverse make-up of the Exodus narrative. In instances where it is difficult to perceive the

identity of a source, it may be possible to discern a possible polemical thrust inherent in a section of scripture. The polemic against the Jeroboamic calves has been alluded to already. The ordination of the Levites is another. It is the contention of some¹⁵² that verses 25-29 represent a polemic against the Aaronide priesthood. Unfortunately it has been the case that traditio-historical criticism has given rise to excesses in the subjective interpretation of the golden calf story and many of the theories of Lehming, for example, are all too fanciful. Lehming, it will be recalled, posited two different traditions for Exodus 32, one of a golden calf and the other of an earlier wooden calf. The thesis was conceived without due regard for the investigation by both ancients and moderns into the construction and destruction of the image (vv 4, 20, 24). Indeed, were it not for the timely publication of Loewenstamm's monumental work, Lehming's theorizing would have continued to go unchecked by any external, objective controls.

In contradistinction to Lehming, the present investigator perceives the core narrative of Exodus 32 to comprise verses 1-6, 15-24 and 30-35 and reflects old

¹⁵²E.g. T. J. Meek, loc. cit.; A.H.J. Gunneweg, op. cit., pp. 116, 219-225; A. Cody, A History of Old Testament Priesthood, Analecta Biblica 35 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969), p. 165.

Epic tradition (JE). The later accretions must remain something of an enigma for one cannot be certain from whose redactional pen they came. Criteria to indicate whether they are Deuteronomistic or simply expansions of E are not available. Possibly the documentary paradigm we are utilizing is inadequate to get at the passage's development, but until we are presented with something superior these are the only controls upon which we can depend. One awaits with curious anticipation for the development of newer paradigms such as that proposed by Rendtorff to see if our understanding can be further enhanced. Though, as B. W. Anderson has pointed out, Rendtorff's new beginning must be guided by external controls over reconstruction of the prehistory of the text and must be anchored firmly in the final form of the text which, after all, is the inescapable beginning and end of exegesis.¹⁵³

The critical era has enabled exegetes to reach into the heart of the biblical material and has caused the Church to revamp its thinking in the light of the many insights it has received. Yet the impact that the critical era has had on the Church has been a disturbing one.

Far from automatically bringing the Bible closer to the average man, the critical method flounders

¹⁵³B. W. Anderson, op. cit., p. 103.

helplessly in our secularized churches before a growing sense of alienation. Indeed, our well-educated modern congregations can tell you that the Bible is filled with myth, but they have ceased to understand its language of faith.¹⁵⁴

The understanding of Exod. 32 has changed much over the centuries. Time and again we have seen clearly that the concerns and presuppositions taken to the text radically affected the exegetical outcome. This was true in every era and the critics were no less guilty than the early tannaitic rabbis or the mediaeval allegorists or the later Puritans and pious nonconformists. Yet each age has contributed to our corpus of knowledge and one invariably builds upon the thinking of previous generations of saints and scholars. From the different hermeneutical perspectives one learns the pitfalls to be avoided and the strengths to be consolidated. To arrogantly suggest that 'popular' exegesis began with the rise of critical methodology or to explicitly ignore biblical scholarship prior to Graf-Wellhausen is to imply that the authentic meaning of the scriptures has been beyond the grasp of people through centuries and limits the accessibility of the meaning of the text to men of

¹⁵⁴B. S. Childs, "The Old Testament as Scripture of the Church," Concordia Theological Monthly, XLIII (1972), 710f.

recent times.¹⁵⁵ On the other hand, dissatisfaction with the higher critical school dare not lead one, in a winsome longing to return to a pre-critical era, to discount the past one hundred years as if they had never existed!

(Yet) when criticism has done its perfect work, the important question remains: What does the text mean? Critical study will help very considerably to find the answer to this question, but the meaning of Scripture...is what matters most.¹⁵⁶

In 1974 one answer took the form of the publication of a different sort of Exodus commentary. A courageous work, this tome of Yale professor Brevard Childs was the result of painstaking research and a wholly new approach to the enigmas of biblical hermeneutics. It will now provide the basis of future discussion and perhaps point the direction that biblical theology will take if it is to remain a viable discipline in the next century.

¹⁵⁵"One often reads in the text-books that the medieval church deprived the people of the Bible by claiming the sole right of proper interpretation. One now wonders whether the Bible has become the private bailiwick of technical scholars who make a similar claim..." *ibid.*

¹⁵⁶F. F. Bruce, "Primary Sense and Plenary Sense," Epworth Review, IV, No. 2 (May, 1977), 94.

CHAPTER IV

CANONICAL CRITICISM AND THE "CANONICAL SHAPE" OF EXODUS

In February 1972, Brevard Childs delivered a paper entitled "The Old Testament as Scripture of the Church" to a symposium held at Concordia Seminary. His thesis, after a century of critical study, was an acknowledgment that we have learned to read the Bible as a secular book but have lost the ability to discern in it the vox Dei.

We have become highly skilled in studying its history and traditions, tracing its growth and redactions, and contrasting its various concepts. Yet we now find that we have difficulty hearing in it the Word of God, of being nourished on it as the bread of life, of being revived and quickened by its Gospel. We are uncertain as to what it means to understand the Bible as Sacred Scripture of the church--to stand within its tradition rather than "outside the camp."¹

It was this ability to read the Bible as the Scripture of the Church that most concerned Childs, for it reflected a problem in the history of biblical interpretation that had been an issue for more than a millennium. We have noted already in previous chapters a tension existing between an original meaning of the text and a present understanding. The effort of early Jewish

¹B. S. Childs, "The Old Testament as Scripture of the Church," Concordia Theological Monthly, XLIII (1972), 711.

exegetes to abstract the peshat or "plain meaning" from the various applied meanings of a homiletical nature was not entirely successful.² The peshat of the text seemed to have been understood in rabbinic circles in terms of the traditional teaching of Scripture which was recognized as authoritative. Similarly in Christian interpretation the dilemma existed in distinguishing between a literal, moral and allegorical sense of the biblical material. On occasions an appeal was made to a literal sense to facilitate the mustering of arguments in a polemic against the Jewish community. However, we have noted that exegesis was frequently strained and overstated in the zealous attempt to condemn Judaism. Augustine, himself, resorted to allegorical interpretation of a most dubious nature and in the period that followed him any recourse to a literal sense of Scripture became more and more tenuous. According to a study by Beryl Smalley,³ the Christian Church had to wait until the twelfth century and the Victorines to experience a revival of emphasis upon the sensus literalis of the Bible.

²In his article, "The 'Plain' Meaning of Scripture in Early Jewish Exegesis," Papers of the Institute of Jewish Studies, London, I (Jerusalem: 1964), 140-145, R. Lowe argued that what was often designated as the peshat was not the natural meaning of the text, but far removed from it.

³Cited by B. S. Childs, "The Sensus Literalis of Scripture: An Ancient and Modern Problem," Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Theologie, Festschrift W. Zimmerli (Göttingen: 1976).

It was a revival which would reach its climax in the influence of St. Thomas Aquinas who finally moved Christian exegesis onto a solid foundation. Thomas insisted that the words of the Bible could have only one meaning. This meaning provided the sensus literalis of the text and accorded with the intention given to the words by the writer (though Thomas extended its meaning to cover the intention of God also).

Meanwhile in eleventh century France, the Jews, too, had recaptured an interest in the literal sense of the Scriptures. Rashi was concerned to derive the plain meaning by reference to grammar, parallel passages and rational deduction. He continued to pass on the traditional haggadic interpretations insofar as the derived senses did not deprive the text of its literal sense. His comment on Gen. 3:8 was characteristic: "I am only concerned here with the plain sense of Scripture and with such Aggadoth that explain the words of Scripture in a manner that fits in with them."⁴ Later Jewish mediaeval scholars differentiated further between the peshat and the derash or applied sense. In an, as yet, unpublished article, Childs referred to Ibn Ezra as allowing such a limited place to derash "as to call into question the concept of the text having a multiplicity of senses."⁵

⁴Ibid., p. 5. Cf. H. Hailperin, Rashi and the Christian Scholars (Pittsburgh: 1963).

⁵Ibid.

Through Nicholas of Lyra, the great fourteenth century Christian interpreter, the Jewish and Christian concerns for the sensus literalis experienced further consolidation and refinement. Childs pointed out that not only did Lyra continue to insist on the historical and literal sense of Scripture but attempted to hold together an historical exegesis of the Old Testament along with a Christian understanding of the New Testament's authority without departing from the literal sense in either case.⁶ But the advances made thus far were eroded by subsequent generations of nominalist theologians who defined the proper understanding of the Bible as lying within the sole prerogative of the Church. The Church was held up to the mediaeval masses as being the only dispenser of the means of God's grace and the central and only authority in explicating the faith.

Thanks to the Protestant reformers biblical exegesis was able to burst the bounds of prevalent parochialism and resurrect the sensus literalis of the Scriptures by making it available to all. Both Luther and Calvin emphasized the plain, straight-forward meaning of the Bible. Luther sought to reunite the theological and the grammatical sense while Calvin disavowed any dichotomy existing between them. The French reformer spoke of the verus scripturae sensus which was both literal and spiritual. There was no need to "spiritualize"

⁶Ibid., p. 6.

the material for in its plain meaning the Scripture witnessed God's Word to humanity. Unfortunately, despite the serious attempt of numerous post-reformation writers to confine themselves to the sensus literalis of the text, the tendency to homilize tore apart the unity of the verus scripturae sensus. The result was a fragmenting into different layers of meaning separating the writer's original intentions from a translated contemporary significance.

The effect of the rise of historical-critical methodology was to renew commitment to the literal sense of the Bible. But let us be clear that this commitment was qualitatively distinct from that of the Reformers. Whereas Luther and Calvin recognized a theological meaning which was integral to and inseparable from a literal or grammatical meaning, the newer critics succeeded in forcing a wedge between these two aspects of hermeneutics.⁷ Therein lay the difference between the sixteenth and nineteenth century interpreters. And W.

⁷Hans Frei challenged the familiar thesis that both reformers and nineteenth century critics shared a similar view regarding the literal sense of the text. By tracing the works of such men as Spinoza, Collins, the English Deists, the German Pietists, Herder and Kant, Frei has demonstrated the major changes which emerged in the eighteenth century, The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative. A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

Robertson Smith's appeal in 1880⁸ to the Reformers as a justification for his historico-critical methodology was clearly without foundation. He made the mistake of equating the Reformers' sensus literalis with what might better be called his sensus historicus.

This will need further elucidation. It is imperative that one understand what the exponents of the historico-critical approach meant when they referred to the literal sense of a passage. It was the goal of the historical-critical exegetes to move behind the present form of the text, to remove pious and interpretive accretions to the material and to recover the original historical kernel.⁹ In attempting to do this the critic was placing an evaluative judgment upon the historical reference. That is to say he sought to determine whether or not a particular biblical passage was true. The importance, therefore, of discovering the original sense of the text was paramount. Childs has argued that the historico-critical approach to the problem of the literal sense of the Bible had four major effects.¹⁰ First, he suggested, by identifying the literal and historical

⁸W. Robertson Smith, The Old Testament in the Jewish Church (Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1881).

⁹B. Jowett, "On the Interpretation of Scripture," Essays and Reviews (London: 1860), p. 338.

¹⁰B. S. Childs, "Sensus Literalis," op. cit., pp. 11-13.

senses, the integrity of the literal sense was virtually destroyed. It had become a means to move behind the text to some historical reality. Historical research now governed the explanation of the biblical text.

Second, because the literal sense was equated with the original sense, objectivity was lost and exegesis became highly speculative. As a result, myriad reconstructions of Israel's history flourished:

The literal sense of the text no longer functions to preserve fixed literary parameters; rather, because of the preoccupation of exegesis with origins, the literal sense dissolves before the hypothetical reconstructions of the original situations on whose recovery correct interpretation allegedly depends.¹¹

The third effect of defining the literal sense as the historical according to Childs, was to alter the concept of a canonical understanding of the biblical material. Prior to the rise of historical criticism, the Bible had been understood as the Scriptures of a community of faith. It had been written as a repository of faith to instruct future generations of the recipients of God's grace. The community had therefore structured the contents of the canon for didactic purposes to communicate God's revelatory events in such a way as to point beyond them to the reality of the Church's appropriation of them in faith. By questioning the literary, historical and theological boundaries set by the historical Jewish community, Childs noted that the advocates of historical-

¹¹Ibid., p. 12.

criticism failed to recognize the canonical context in which a passage was located. This argument requires further explanation, but since it is one of the incapable focal points of Childs' newer hermeneutic, we shall come back to discuss it at length. The final effect, cited by Childs, of the rise of historico-critical methodology on the problem of the literal sense of Scripture was to drive a time wedge between the original sense of the text, now fully anchored in the historical past, and a contemporary sense relevant to the modern age. The relationship between what the Bible meant and what it means was to continue to pose a serious hermeneutical dilemma for theologians throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The distinction between what might usefully be termed the explicative and the applicative tasks of exegesis resulted in a splintering of the theological enterprise and in a mutual suspicion between the various branches of the church academy. First to differentiate between the disciplines of biblical theology and dogmatics had been Johann Gabler in 1787 in his Altdorf lecture.¹² He defined the former in terms of explaining

¹²Entitled "Oratio de justo discrimine theologiae biblicae et dogmaticae regundisque recte utrius finibus," it was delivered at the University of Altdorf, March 30, 1787. Included in his Opuscula Academica, II (Ulm: 1831), pp. 179-198. Benedictus Spinoza had over a century earlier distinguished between the literal meaning of the text and the question of truth. But it remained the achievement of Gabler to properly recognize the need for distinct disciplines as a concrete expression of the

the permanent validity of the biblical message. It was, for him, an objective, historical science which was able to find recourse to the historical setting of the biblical material. The task of selecting and evaluating these religious ideas and incorporating them into the philosophical and cultural genre of the day lay within the domain of dogmatics. Similarly in 1926, Otto Eissfeldt spoke of an objective historical study of the Old Testament on the one hand, and a normative study which sought to erect systematic paradigms on the other.¹³

Most recently, however, Krister Stendahl has strongly restated the need for the distinction between the two disciplines.¹⁴ It was Stendahl's contention that the isolation of the explicative task of exegesis was the mature outgrowth of the historical and critical study of the Bible, particularly in the nineteenth century. He believed that the old liberal school and its biblical basis for the view that the Old Testament writers moved to a position of ethical monotheism through an evolutionary process had not been shattered by the

dichotomy that existed within theology as a result of historico-critical methodology.

¹³O. Eissfeldt, "Israelitisch-jüdische Religionsgeschichte und alttestamentliche Theologie," ZAW, XLVI (1926), 1-12.

¹⁴K. Stendahl, "Biblical Theology, Contemporary," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), pp. 418-432.

conservatives, "but by the extreme radicals of the Religionsgeschichtliche Schule."¹⁵ A new emphasis had been placed upon stripping the twentieth century mind of its sophisticated vesture and identifying it with "the feelings and thought patterns of the past."¹⁶ What this application of historical methodology was doing was to place distance between biblical times and the present, to uncover the significance of the message for the original readers and to keep questions of factuality and relevance out of sight. The Religionsgeschichtliche Schule had made a crucial distinction between an original meaning and a present meaning.

Stendahl argued that the descriptive task of Biblical studies should be radically separated from the constructive task of the theologian. He claimed for both a legitimate function, but the major task of Biblical studies lay in historical description that could be objectively controlled by scientific investigation. Theologians of the Bible were then allowed to make value judgments or homiletical applications, just as long as they are fully aware that such disciplines were subjective and outside the pale of objective verification.¹⁷

It was primarily the job of the systematic theologian to bridge the gulf between past and present, to seek to answer the question of what the text meant for contemporary man. By ascertaining what the biblical writers

¹⁵Ibid., p. 418.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷B. S. Childs, Biblical Theology in Crisis (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), p. 79.

meant, Stendahl sought not to mount suspicion against theology but to safeguard both the freedom of the systematic theologian and the concrete individuality of biblical data as well as to guard against overambitious and unjustified claims made in the name of biblical theology.

Brevard Childs¹⁸ rose to the challenge set by Gabler, Eissfeldt and Stendahl by intimating that the

¹⁸Childs was a student of Prof. Kuist of Princeton who, in turn, was a product of the English Bible Movement which flourished in America during the inter-war years. Originating in what was then Biblical Seminary New York, this school of thought sought to develop inductive methods in study of the Bible. So Childs had been exposed to hermeneutical principles which viewed a biblical passage within the context of its larger literary setting, most frequently a book. It was essentially a literary approach to the Scriptures which minimized perusal of theological issues per se. But with the renewed interest given to dogmatics by neo-orthodoxy and their non-literal means of interpretation, the English Bible school floundered in the wake of the rise to prominence of the Biblical Theology Movement. Cognizant of the limitations imposed upon the science of hermeneutics by inductive methodology, Childs completed his studies in Germany with Gerhard von Rad. It was undoubtedly there that Childs' hermeneutic was influenced by his teacher's typological approach to the Old Testament in which each scriptural witness became a transparency for a successive witness within the schema of promise-fulfillment. Each salvation event was re-enacted and God's mighty acts were rehearsed in an eschatological understanding of the text as the event pointed beyond itself. As it did the gap existing between the historical moment and the eschatological or didactic interpretation was consciously blurred. However, Childs was not completely happy with von Rad's paradigmatic approach to Old Testament interpretation. Von Rad had failed to deal adequately with the theological substance of the witness and his exegesis had omitted to move from fulfillment to promise, from New Testament to Old, to gain insight into the meaning of a passage. Cf. B. S. Childs, "Interpretation in Faith," Interpretation, XVIII (1964), 436.

exegete must begin self-consciously from an explicit framework of faith that accepted the scriptures as witnessing to a reality beyond themselves. His initial response to Stendahl's thesis was to accuse him of failing to attain the objectivity necessary to execute properly the explicative task of exegesis. Childs insisted that

by defining the Bible as a "source" for objective research the nature of the content to be described has been already determined. A priori, it has become a part of a larger category of phenomena. The possibility of genuine theological exegesis has been destroyed from the outset.¹⁹

In other words Child's thesis, following that of Barth, suggested the impossibility of truly objective Bible study and the inadequacy of the controls to minimize the interpreter's subjectivity. The Bible had to be recognized as a qualitatively different type of book! It was the confessional literature of Israel and the Christian Church and, as such, communicated a theological substance. One does not hear the vox Dei apart from explicative exegesis and not until one has engaged in a study of a text's contemporary sense. Rather, the vox Dei is integral to the whole interpretive enterprise and cannot be divorced from hermeneutics until the exegete ascertained the historical validity of a particular record. In confessing that the scriptures are the Word of God, the Jewish and Christian communities of faith have asserted that the deity has spoken and continues to speak through

¹⁹Ibid.

the sacred writings. One ought to interpret the Scriptures, then, as

...an integral and controlling element in the continuing life of the people of God, or as the locus of that life-giving and active word which awakens the individual's faith, helps him to understand his existence and thus transforms it and imparts "authenticity" to it, liberating him from his bondage to the past and enabling him to be "open" towards the future.²⁰

Childs was not intimating that exegesis should not be a disciplined method of research. On the contrary, he affirmed the need for explicative study at every level of the hermeneutical enterprise and invoked all the historical and critical methodologies to play their part. The historical nature of the biblical witness had to be taken seriously, but Childs warned that

...the framework of faith opposes the presuppositions of historicism that these tools open the true avenue to "what really happened" and provide a means of bypassing the biblical witness to God's redemptive purpose with Israel. The theological framework of faith also frees the exegete from the need of harmonizing the biblical witness with the finds of extrabiblical evidence for the sake of a coherent theory of historical truth.²¹

Historico-critical research lay at the heart of the theological task but existed as part of the exegetical

²⁰F. F. Bruce, "Primary Sense and Plenary Sense," Epworth Review, IV, No. 2 (May, 1977), 104-5.

²¹B. S. Childs, "Interpretation in Faith," op. cit., p. 440.

responsibility of studying the Bible as the Word of God.²² It was because the divine reality witnessed to in the writings was not confined to the historical past but communicated to the present that Childs felt compelled to acknowledge the inadequacy of historical tools alone to achieve the full-orbed task of interpretation. In the final analysis it was the gracious work of God's spirit that illuminated the mind and created the understanding of the heart.

Genuine exegesis presupposes that we are not simply doing motif research or comparing ideas, but through the biblical witness we are encountering the structure of divine reality which is its own norm. This self-authenticating character of divine reality is allowed its full freedom only within the activity of genuine exegesis. The biblical text is not a dead vestige from a past age but a living vehicle for a divine action which lays claim upon its reader.²³

It is the contention of the present investigator that Stendahl's failure to obtain widespread acceptance of his arguments was due, in large measure, to the confusion he made between what the biblical message means to

²²K. Frör emphasizes the same point: "The use of the historical method is only fruitful when it is inside the circle and not as a technical or preliminary stage," Biblische Hermeneutik (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1961), p. 60. Cited by Childs, *ibid.*, p. 438. Cf. also A. S. Peake, "Criticism has never attracted me for its own sake. The all-important thing for the student of the Bible is to pierce to the core of its meaning." The Bible: Its Origin, its Significance and its Abiding Worth (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1913), p. 455.

²³B. S. Childs, "Interpretation in Faith," *op. cit.*, p. 444.

contemporary man and the applicative task of exegesis. In moving between the categories of what the message meant and what it means, Stendahl implied another independent stage which, in his discussion, fell under the rubric of the applicative task. That independent category was an evaluative task. In other words Stendahl was suggesting that exegesis comprised three elements: first, the original intentionality of the author was objectively recovered, then a value judgment was passed upon it to assess the message's viability and finally the worthwhile aspect of the message discerned in the previous stage was somehow homiletically appropriated. At once the fallacy of Stendahl's approach becomes apparent, for what criteria would he employ to ascertain the factuality of a recorded event or the viability of an ethical monologue? From where would he derive empirical devices to adjudicate the truth or falsity of the biblical material? And what type of application could be built upon such tenuous evaluative procedures?

The solution can only be to hold together the explicative and applicative tasks involved in biblical hermeneutics. They are inseparable, for just as event and witness cannot be held apart, neither can history and theology or revelation and inspiration. This accords with Childs' basic thesis and several consequences follow as a result. First of all it made clear the fact that one could no longer speak in terms of the author's

intentionality. To insist on the impossibility of a divorce between explication and application was to abrogate the distinction between what the text originally meant and what it presently means. To uncover the former it would be necessary to undertake an historical reconstruction to determine a Sitz im Leben and recreate the extent of the primary oracle and derive its meaning in terms of its reception by an original audience. To accomplish this, one had to decanonize the literature by abstracting it from its canonical reference, and placing it in a position which was obviously not part of the integral context of the canon. In other words, to engage in the attempt to go behind the present canonical form of the Bible is legitimate to recover a history of Israelite religion but not to function normatively under the rubric of the faith of the Christian Church. It is only as one operates within the bounds imposed upon the Scripture by the historical confession of the Church which witnesses to the canon as the Word of God that one can justify one's study of Scripture as normative Christian exegesis.

This leads on to the second consequence of Childs' thesis which is that the Christian exegete must read the Bible theologically as opposed to reading it merely as an historical narrative. What Childs meant by this was that the text must be allowed to speak for itself without preconceptions regarding its composition, development or validity. As we have it, the Bible is the canon

of the Church and needs to be read as credal material if we are to speak to the issue of what the Church believes. The basic problem at the heart of the old liberal-fundamentalist impasse earlier this century was that both groups shared a common heritage in eighteenth century hermeneutics. Each utilized a concept of history which exposed scripture to the application of canons of historical enquiry in an effort to determine the validity of the biblical message. The effect was to rob the text of its essence as vox Dei. Hans Frei, in a study of the period, has demonstrated that the basic premise of biblical interpretation lay in the pre-supposition that the original intentionality of a distant writer could be re-captured and that the exegetical paradigm took the form of a general hermeneutic.²⁴ That is to say, the Bible was considered simply as a piece of literature in common with all literatures. It could be understood in a similar manner.

Obviously one is aware that similarity does exist between scripture and secular writings. Were this not the case communication, at the last, would prove to be impossible. But the issue here is not one of adherence to the structure of the English (or original languages) since obviously the Bible is comprehensible in that sense. It is not a collection of gibberish! But to suggest a

²⁴H. Frei, loc. cit.

quid pro quo equivalence is to do injustice to the concept of scripture as the credal statement of the Church. The Bible is qualitatively a different type of literature.

The Old Testament is not a message about acts in history as such, but about the power of the Word of God. The Word of God which proclaims the will of God confirms itself in bringing to completion its promise. History is the medium of God's activity, but history receives its meaning from the divine word and not vice versa.²⁵

It is the assertion of this dissertation that the Bible needs to be read theologically because the scriptures function normatively within the categories and canonical shape which the Church has given them. If one were to attempt a strictly 'historical' reading of the material, one would be forging a wedge between the text in its canonical setting and the reality to which the text witnesses and assuming that the reality is tied up in the history to which the text refers.

The importance of this focal point of the discipline of canonical criticism cannot be overestimated. Essentially Childs argued that historico-critical exegesis, viable in its own right, effectively de-canonizes the biblical literature by placing it in some other context than the canon. And a passage's position in the

²⁵B. S. Childs, "Canon and Criticism: Old Testament as Scripture of the Church," unpublished Sprunt Lectures: II (Union Theological Seminary, 1972).

canon is of paramount significance for the Church's theological reflection.

The concept of canon implies that these writings have a function which is not exhausted by their original role in history, but they continue to function in the life of the Church in each successive generation through the work of the Holy Spirit. By its peculiar shaping of the tradition, the canon provides the hermeneutical key for the later generation of Christians to appropriate the ancient testimony for itself.²⁶

It is Childs' conviction that the work of God is not buried in events of the remote past which are accessible only to the erudite historian. Rather it is through the present continuous activity of the Holy Spirit that God's work is mediated to the community of faith. So that what the historian might characterize as a late literary fiction, the Church confesses to be the full and faithful witness of the story of God's redemption of his people, the Church.

It is understandable, then, that Childs seeks to invoke the scholarly work of saints of every age in the full-orbed task of exegesis. If a text must be understood in the peculiar manner of being a confessional statement of belief, it follows that the text must be studied in close connection with the community of faith which treasured it. For if one is to insist that scripture alludes to a reality beyond itself which is not

²⁶B. S. Childs, "The Old Testament as Scripture of the Church," op. cit., p. 714.

bound by historical chains to a distant past but continues to break into the present, that reality ought to be in evidence in the living tradition of the Church. That is to say, since "truth" cannot be objectively discerned apart from the community of faith, exegesis becomes a commitment to a particular perspective of theological insight. Therefore the 'proper' meaning of a passage is that meaning witnessed to by the community of faith. It is therefore essential to understand the interpretation of scripture by successive generations of exegetes of both communities.²⁷

²⁷ Such an historical survey needs to be representative of the different Jewish and Christian traditions since each approached the biblical text from a different perspective. So by studying the various interpretive endeavours within each community and the interaction between the communities one gains new insight into the dynamics of biblical hermeneutics. The exegete becomes more aware of the manner in which a text became and was perceived as a vehicle for Jewish and Christian revelation. "In contrast to the dialectic of hearing the single text in the light of the whole Old Testament witness stands a method which recognizes the superfluous word with a revelatory system of infallible consistency. In contrast to the dialectic between the Old Testament and New Testament stands the tradition of the Synagogue Fathers, making its claim as an avenue of revelation. In contrast to the dialectic between witness and substance stands another community of faith raising its own testimony as the people of God. Only when this profoundest of theological problems is honestly encountered can the resulting exegesis be adequate to the theological task." B. S. Childs, "Interpretation in Faith," op. cit., p. 449.

Childs hoped in this way to recover some of the theological and exegetical insights of earlier eras. If it was the contribution of the nineteenth century critics to give to the biblical writings a greater historical dimension, it was surely the achievement of the pre-critical scholars to view the material in broader thematic outlines. Both perspectives have much to contribute to the modern exegete, to enable him to move beyond the claims of men of every age that one particular exegetical model is definitive in understanding the scriptures. Much is to be gleaned from each era, for the ancients were able to make associations and suggest connections within a passage that might never have occurred to the modern reader.²⁸ Effectively Childs was insisting that no dichotomy existed between the People and the Book. It was a document treasured by the Church, written by faith, in faith for subsequent generations of faith. The same Spirit who had inspired its writing illuminated its understanding. To comprehend the Book, therefore, one had to stand within the Church in a

²⁸M. Greenberg, Understanding Exodus (New York: Behrman Ho. Inc., 1969), pp. 108. Greenberg makes the point that "...the text in fact is regularly elliptical, omitting motives and syntactical connections. Since the modern reader has no assurance that his supplied connection is apt, coming as he does from a radically different context....the suggestions of early exegetes, of different cultural settings, as to possibilities of coherence are welcome even when not decisive" (p. 6).

committed position of faith. Explication and application were welded together by virtue of the fact that in scripture the Church witnessed to confronting the Living Word.

To summarize: Childs has stressed the need to recapture in modern exegesis the sensus literalis of the biblical material. By this he re-echoes the understanding of Calvin who defined it as the verus scripturae sensus which was both literal and spiritual in essence. It has been Childs' contention that the discipline of historical criticism rather than reflecting the concerns of the reformers, actually failed to maintain their integrity to the scriptures as the Living Word of God. As a result of the breach between biblical theology and dogmatics, the explicative and applicative tasks of exegesis, the Bible ceased to^{be} read as the scripture of the Church. That is to say, the text was frequently deprived of its place in the canon and subsequently lost the peculiar significance given it by the Church.

To regain the normative Christian (or Jewish) understanding of a particular passage it is necessary to study the text within its canonical context, for only then can one legitimately speak of its role in the faith of Christendom. The canonical shaping of the biblical text was a deliberate patterning of the material by the Church to enable it to function theologically for generations yet unborn. Hence, for example, there are significantly few historical references in Deutero-Isaiah

(perhaps the only one being a veiled reference to Cyrus who is depicted as a type of Abraham) in order that both parts of the book of Isaiah might function in a complementary fashion.²⁹ Psalms are purposefully loosed from their cultic context to become a witness to the messianic hope which looked for the consummation of God's kingship through his Anointed One.³⁰ In this sense the scripture can be perceived as being both pedagogical and eschatological in emphasis.

The hermeneutical implication for biblical studies and for this investigation is obvious. The present writer affirms that the Church's task of interpreting the scriptures cannot be simply identified with historico-critical methodology. As scripture it continues to speak to the Church and it is therefore within the confines of the Church's confession that it becomes comprehensible. It is not the role of scientific criticism to inform the modern reader as to what the Bible really means. Rather, it is canonical criticism which testifies to its theological role in the life of the community of faith.

So much, then, for the theoretical model underlying "canonical criticism." It is essential now to turn our attention in the remainder of this chapter to the task of studying the text of Exodus and particularly the

²⁹B. S. Childs, "Canon and Criticism," op. cit., Lecture II.

³⁰Ibid., Lecture III.

incident of the golden calf as it functioned as part of the scripture of the Church.

The Canonical Shape of Exodus

We have noted in the previous chapter that the narrative of the golden calf in Exod. 32 embodies old Epic tradition (JE material) and contains two Deuteronomic or Elohist expansions. So that apart from Moses' lengthy intercession in verses 7-14 and the account of the Levitical slaughter in verses 25-29, the core narrative of the incident is placed back in a time antedating the division of the Solomonic kingdom. Its pre-literary history appears to have been as complex and as difficult to unravel as the text in its final form. It is unclear whether the passage belongs to the E or the J strand. Yet the interesting feature of the golden calf incident is that, along with the two succeeding chapters narrating the renewal of the covenant, the entire unit is surrounded in the book of Exodus by predominantly Priestly material.

Chapters 25-31 of the book recount the detailed instructions for the building of the desert tabernacle and the requirements for the priesthood. These details are reiterated in chapters 35-40 as the story is told of the actual construction of the tabernacle and its paraphernalia. This adherence to the minutiae of Israel's worship seems to reflect priestly concerns. It is obvious that chapters 25-40 represent a completed motif--God's

blueprint for the tabernacle and the subsequent execution of those instructions "as the Lord had commanded." It appears that ch. 32-34 take up again the old Pentateuchal narrative material discontinued in ch. 24. There the indication was that Moses had gone up into the mountain to receive the tables of the law. The reader is therefore prepared for what comes in ch. 31:18ff., despite the intervening priestly material.

What then can be the significance of the final redactional placing of the JE account of the abrogation and renewal of the covenant in the midst of a morass of detailed Priestly interest? Each document represents a narrative which is complete in itself and ostensibly distinct from the other. To all intents and purposes, it is apparent that the concerns of the different authors stand in stark contrast to one another. On the other hand, P is careful to relate the exactitude of true worship and the importance of willing obedience to every aspect of YHWH's declared will (hence the constant repetition throughout chapters 35-40 of the phrase כִּלְיֹנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ). And, on the other hand, the JE account of the apostasy at Sinai interrupts the Priestly material with a story of disobedience which resulted in judgment and reluctant forgiveness. In this latter, the emphasis is away from hierocracy to a focus on Moses as undisputed leader and fervent intercessor. Indeed, as we have seen, Aaron's role in the apostasy is depicted in uncomplimentary terms. The ancestor of Israel's priesthood was seen by JE as

providing weak and ineffective leadership. And were it not for the inclusion of the Levitical intervention, the priestly interests may not have been represented at all!

What can have been the purpose of placing this older Pentateuchal narrative in the midst of later priestly material? Why did ch. 31:18 not follow on from ch. 24:18? In his recent commentary on Exodus, Childs stresses the importance of dealing with the text in its final stage of formation as it is experienced today. There is, he comments, a "great need to understand the present composition as a piece of literature with its own integrity."³¹ He continues: "Unfortunately in recent years the complexity of the critical questions has tended to obscure the literary achievements of the final stage of composition."³² This point has also been observed by Moshe Greenberg in his recent commentary on the book of Exodus:

Modern scholars are inclined to devote attention to matters other than the message of the present text...Attention has been diverted from the textual entity transmitted by tradition to its newly analyzed hypothetically reconstructed elements...But the received text is the only historically attested datum; it alone has had demonstrable effects; it alone is the undoubted product of Israelite creativity.³³

³¹B. S. Childs, Exodus, op. cit., p. xiv.

³²Ibid., p. 562.

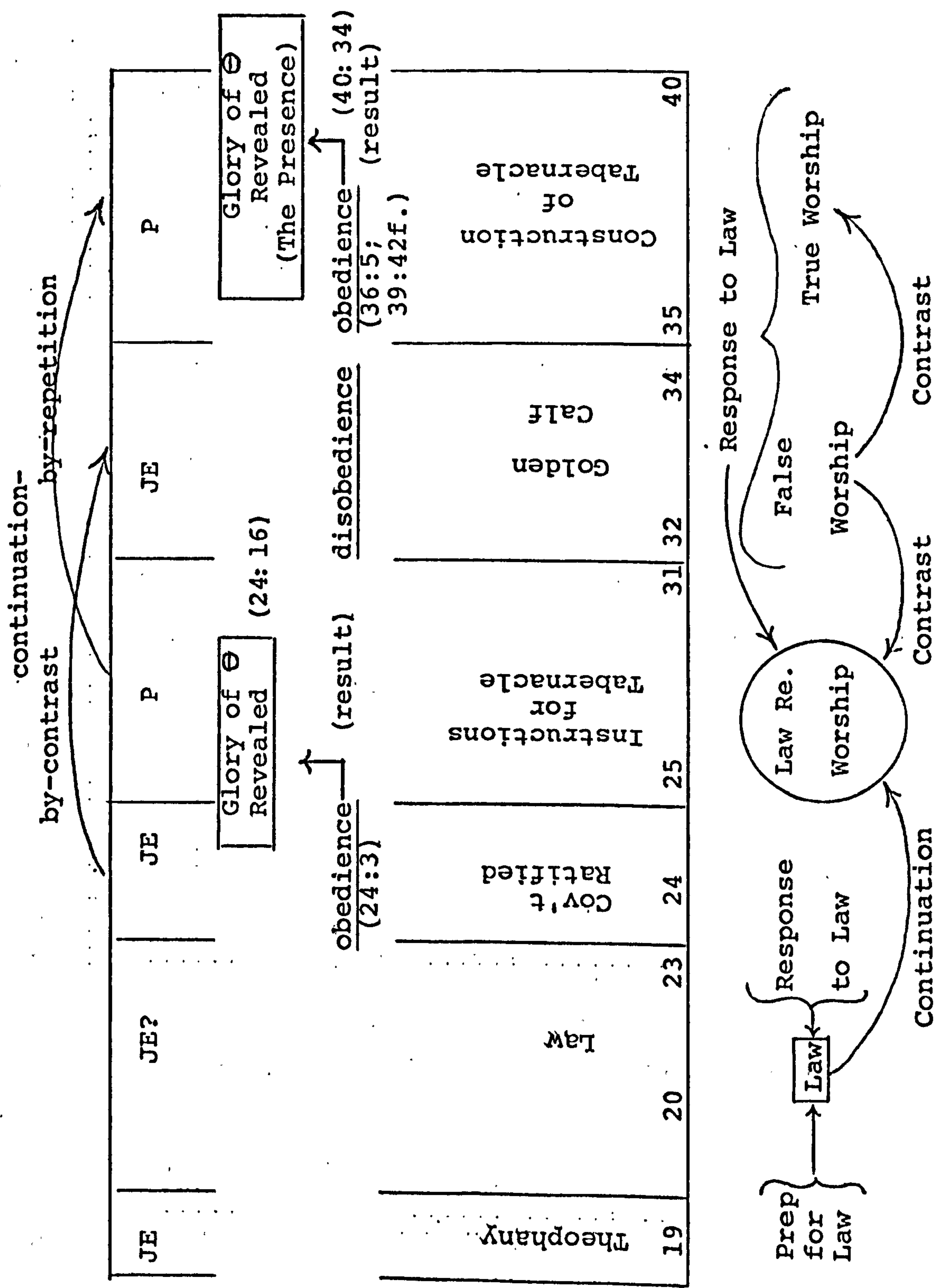
³³M. Greenberg, op. cit., pp. 4, 5.

Hence it becomes imperative that one deal with the text in its canonical shape. By stressing the importance of the final stage in the composition of the text, Childs seeks to take the work of the accumulated writers and redactors seriously. Somewhere along the historical line of development the various sources and traditions came together with design and purpose. Possibly a literary redactor composed the story making use of older sources. The placing together of such material was not carried out piecemeal but, like von Rad's Yahwistic writer, this redactor demonstrated some degree of ingenuity and played a decisive role in making up the biblical material as it is encountered today.³⁴ If there was to be any meaning in the juxtaposition of the JE material of Exod. 32-34 and the surrounding Priestly material, that significance can only be ascertained in terms of their canonical shaping. Ostensibly we have in the second half of the book of Exodus two conflicting viewpoints, one reflecting priestly interests, the other antithetical to those same concerns. Yet they exist in apposition to each other, placed in a context determined by the community of faith which treasured both. The important question to be raised, then, was to determine what new function the pericopae exercised in this new canonical setting. Each source may be autonomous in its

³⁴B. S. Childs, Exodus, op. cit., pp. xv, 558.

own right, but combined something radically new emerges. It is to this canonical function that we now must turn.

Structurally the last half of the book of Exodus can be schematized as follows:



Broadly speaking, these chapters from 19 to 40 are concerned with the law and Israel's response to that law. However composite the material, it is clearly perceptible that the segments hang together as a readable whole. The account of the theophany sets the scene, so to speak, for the giving of the law both in the general requirements of the Decalogue (ch. 20) and the more specific regulations of the Book of the Covenant (chh. 21-23). The nation responded positively to the divine commands and the covenant was subsequently ratified. Interestingly in this context, is the relationship between the people's obedience (24:3, 7) and the presence of YHWH in the form of the תִּיבָה. It is an equation which recurs in ch. 40.

At this point in the story the older pre-monarchical material is interrupted with the later priestly narrative concerning the tabernacle. It is apparent that the detailed instructions for the building of the tabernacle are viewed as an integral part of the requirements which God revealed to his people in the ancient Mosaic code. Such an association would obviously lend greater authority to the hieratic patterns of temple worship. The community of faith saw the detailed specifications for the tabernacle as an extension of the law delivered to Moses. They were all part of the commandments given by YHWH to his people.

The priestly material continues in ch. 35ff. in which an account is given of the detailed construction

of the tabernacle in strictest adherence to the minutiae of the oracles of chapters 25ff. The instructions of YHWH are obeyed in every detail, as is clear from the repetition of the phrase כָּל-לְשׁוֹן אֵלֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל. A noticeable parallel with Israel's obedience in chapter 24 is found at the end of this final segment of Exodus. As a result of the completion of the tabernacle, the manifestation of the nation's obedience, the כְּבוֹד of YHWH resides in the tent of meeting (40:34). In both cases the people's obedience resulted in the glory of YHWH descending in the form of a cloud, in one instance on Mt. Sinai and the second on the newly-constructed tabernacle.

Now in the midst of this motif of law and obedience, one encounters the incident of the apostasy of the golden calf. It is obvious from its position immediately following the divine requirements regarding law and worship and its juxtaposition with the people's obedience in building the tent that the episode of the apostasy underlines Israel's rank disobedience both to the decree of God in the Decalogue which demanded abstinence . . . from creating a graven image (ch. 20:4)³⁵ and to the

³⁵It is uncertain whether it was the first commandment that was broken, a repudiation of Jehovah as God, or the second, an image demanded to represent Jehovah. In either case, it was a clear and deliberate transgression of the covenant that they had committed themselves to so boldly a few weeks before, a covenant sealed with blood." P. C. Johnston, "Exodus," Wycliffe Bible Commentary (London: Oliphants Ltd., 1963), p. 82.

tabernacle instructions given to Moses. The theme of Israel's disobedience then, is set in the context of the pattern of the true worship of YHWH which consists in obedience and is depicted in contrast to it. Whereas obedience results in the tabernacling presence of YHWH with his people, disobedience results in judgment and the threat of genocide. The covenant relationship between God and Israel is ruptured.

These, then, are the more apparent effects of canonical shaping upon the diverse material of the latter half of the book of Exodus. Of course it would be possible to go further and ascertain the effect of canonical shaping upon the entire book.³⁶ The block of material concerned with the giving of and the response to the law is a natural sequel to the event of the exodus. The deliverance of the nation was from one type of servitude in Egypt to another.³⁷ And the tabernacle as a service

³⁶For schematic outline of the entire book, see Appendix B.

³⁷In his detailed study of the Exodus Pattern in the Bible (London: Faber & Faber, 1963), David Daube has pointed out that one of the major motifs of Exodus concerns the phenomenon of change of master. It is involved in the social laws and customs, but most significantly the result of the deliverance is depicted in terms of the substitution of YHWH's rule for that of Pharaoh's. "How powerful the motif was may be seen in the way it is introduced where God's title over the people, his authority, is to be stressed. The Ten Commandments open 'I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of a house of slaves.'" Daube proceeds to note that the result of God's intervention was to translate the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt to slavery to himself, and cites the apostle Paul involving us in the paradox of the change of master being, in effect, a rescue into liberty (pp. 42-45).

project, in contradistinction to the store-cities of Pithom and Raamses (ch. 1:11), represents the logic of the book. The end result of translation from Pharaoh's domain to the tabernacling presence of YHWH was to serve and worship Israel's God.³⁸ It is in this context that the schema of law and obedience must be seen. There could have been no law, still less no obedience to the law had there been no deliverance. The people's response was not to the law per se, but in gratitude for their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. And it was upon the twin pillars of God's faithful act of redeeming Israel and the nation's grateful response of obedience that the covenant was established.

What God did for Israel authorized him to lay down the law for them. When, faithful to his oath, he delivered them from slavery, he became their sovereign, and as such, was entitled to their obedience...Israel's religiosity is its response to the express will of him who granted it freedom and life as an independent people.³⁹

It follows, then, that the incident of the golden calf, as seen in its canonical context, was understood as an abrogation of the covenant relationship and a negation of the deliverance from Egypt. So it was perceived in the Christian era by St. Stephen in Acts 7:39ff., where the apostasy is described as a turning again towards the bondage of Egypt. And it appears this is how it is

³⁸For a fuller discussion on a thematic approach to the book of Exodus, see Appendices A & B.

³⁹M. Greenberg, op. cit., p. 9.

viewed by the faith community responsible for compiling the book of Exodus. The parallels are unmistakable. In the opening chapters of the book the covenant is threatened (2:23ff.) by the danger of genocide (1:2-22). Pharaoh commands the slaughter of every newborn Israelite male. In Exod. 32, the covenant is again endangered (cf. vv 13, 19) by the threat of genocide (vv 9f.). This time the executor is not Pharaoh but YHWH himself! Only through Moses' intercessions is God's wrath averted and the covenant re-established (Exod. 34).

So the incident of the golden calf finds its way into the final shape of the book of Exodus. Its purpose, besides relating historical narrative, is clearly didactic. The present ordering of the book indicates a theological intent, and Exod. 32 is undoubtedly woven into that intent by its strategic placing in the canon. It is the role which the chapter occupies within the canonical shape of Exodus that must occupy our attention. This is not to minimize the critical studies of the past century but simply to add another dimension of understanding of the text to the exegetical enterprise. After all, this is not only how it has been read by centuries of Christian and Jewish scholars, but this is how the community of faith intended it to be read.

There is a broad consensus among critical scholars in seeing behind the present form of the book a long history of development on both the oral and literary level. On the literary level it seems quite clear that separate literary sources were

joined together at different historical periods... Although the details of the documentary hypothesis continue to be debated, the theory has maintained itself in seeing an earlier composite strand-- usually called JE...and a later source--the Priestly source--...While much attention has been exploited in sorting out the sources and exploring the pre-history of the tradition, little effort has been directed in understanding the significance of the completed book. Yet it is the whole book which Christians read as their Scripture.⁴⁰

Childs points to a fact that we have already alluded to: that the interchange of narrative and legal material in the book indicates that the two elements belong together in the canonical shape of Exodus. As a consequence Law and Gospel are viewed as being inextricably bound. The historical moment which revealed YHWH's grace to Israel and resulted in the nation's deliverance is seen over against the legal formulations and the people's resultant obedience.

Another significant feature which Childs notices about the final form of Exodus is that the account of an original event is often combined with an account of the ongoing celebration of that same event. As an example he cites the intertwining of the original Passover with the later observance of the rite. "Clearly," he says, "the canonical shape of Exodus sought to form the material in such a way as to provide a channel of appropriation for every future generation."⁴¹ The final form of Exodus was

⁴⁰B. S. Childs, "The Old Testament as Scripture of the Church," op. cit., pp. 717-718.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 719.

never intended simply to be a reiteration of the historical processes that gave rise to the birth of a theocratic nation. That it was such a reiteration, however, cannot be doubted. The central thrust of the book is concerned with the lordship of YHWH.⁴² But much more than this was involved. The purpose of the canonical form of the literature was to teach Israel that the basis of Law is Gospel, to reveal the nature of YHWH and to evoke the response of obedience and servitude from generations yet unborn.

It is within this theological framework that the incident of the golden calf finds its place. By positioning the narrative between the forensic material related to the tabernacle, the story emphasizes the importance of obedience to the Law and the fearful consequences of disobedience. Its significance in this regard cannot be overestimated. It has led J. C. Rylaarsdam to note: "Given the fact of sin and disobedience, chapters 32-34 raise issues that are inescapable when chapters 1-15 and 19-24 are taken seriously."⁴³ To submit to the heinous idol was to jeopardize the covenant relationship with YHWH and to invite judgment on a people exiled from his

⁴²J. C. Rylaarsdam has pointed out in this regard that the covenant was broken in Exod. 32 when Israel denied YHWH as king (vv 1, 4, 8), op. cit., p. 1063; cf. also R. L. Honeycutt, "Exodus," Broadman Bible Commentary, I (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1970), pp. 305ff.

⁴³J. C. Rylaarsdam, loc. cit.

presence. For Israel there could be no greater sin.

The episode of the calf is also an integral aspect of the book-as-a-whole. For by regressing to the environment of idol worship, Israel was nullifying their entire existence as a theocratic nation.

Not only does (the story of the golden calf) form the heart of a lengthy unit of three chapters, but it assigns its massive bulk to a place right in the middle of the divine instructions at Sinai. It produces a rupture of enormous proportions and stands as a threat to the covenant from the beginning. In spite of the miraculous delivery from Egypt, of the majesty and awe of Sinai, the Old Testament testifies that Moses had not even descended from the mountain before Israel was apostate.⁴⁴

The book opened with Israel's plight in the idolatrous land of Egypt under the tyranny of a Pharaoh in whose control they were. It was in these circumstances that YHWH set into motion a plan of deliverance. The Abrahamic covenant was endangered (Exod. 2:24) and it was essential for YHWH to intervene redemptively if the promises made to the Patriarchs of posterity, land and God's sovereign presence--in fact, all the ingredients of a theocracy--were to be salvaged. With the accomplishment of the deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, the covenant was re-established in theocratic terms. Israel was instructed to build a dwelling for YHWH. But the response in chapter 32 of apostasy not only represented a return to idolatrous bondage but negated God's deliverance and reduced the exodus event to a sham. Only the

⁴⁴B. S. Childs, Exodus, op. cit., p. 579.

timely intervention of Moses and his appeal to the unconditional Abrahamic covenant⁴⁵ (Exod. 32:11-13; cf. Gen. 15) avoided the catastrophic finale to a history of Israel.

The epic of the golden calf is a commentary on God's mercy for his erring people. The narrative may be viewed within its canonical setting in the book of Exodus, but it must also be seen as the beginning of an even larger compositional unit running through chapter 34. These chapters hang together by virtue of the fact that overarching themes can be clearly seen running through the material. According to Childs, these include the law tablets and Moses' intercessions for the nation. This latter theme builds up during the three chapters and reaches a climax in chapter 34. The central theme of chapter 33, the presence of God, Childs suggests, relates to the act of Israel's disobedience in the preceeding chapter, and the assurance given of forgiveness in the succeeding one. It seems clear then, that the general framework ought to be seen in terms of sin and forgiveness, the apostasy of the nation threatening the covenant with Yahweh, punishment and final restoration in sovereign mercy.

⁴⁵R. E. Clements argues that the Abrahamic covenant was "the unshakable guarantee of Israel's election... expressed in the Priestly account of the making of the golden calf." That covenant appears to have formed the very basis of YHWH's work on Israel's behalf. R. E. Clements, Abraham and David (London: S.C.M. Press, 1967), p. 76.

Childs anticipated the deluge of critical protest in reference to structural inconsistencies within chapter 32 itself. But by weaving together one section with another and illustrating dependency he argues persuasively for literary wholeness. For example, the problem of the Deuteronomic addition (vv 7-14) anticipating Moses' discovery of the golden calf raises the problem of Moses who, having already received knowledge from Yahweh as the nation's apostasy, seemed nonetheless surprised when he encountered the incident (vv 15ff.). Obviously there is a connection between the two aspects of the story and Childs suggests they need to be seen in relation to the "synthetic achievement of the whole chapter."⁴⁶ Such an understanding of the material must take into account a number of factors. In the first instance the material has a topical schema which does much to disrupt the chronological sequence of the narrative. In other words, the message of the text takes precedence over any attempt to be true to the actual ordering of the events whatever that might have been.

Because the style of the chapter focuses on the series of polarities which reflects a topical interest in the content of the story, the logical sequence of the narrative is often distorted. The failure to evaluate properly this literary shaping has often led literary critics to fragment the chapter into multiple layers and sources which lack all cohesion.⁴⁷

⁴⁶B. S. Childs, Exodus, op. cit., p. 558.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 563.

Secondly there is the occurrence in v. 18 of an "old piece of poetic tradition" which had to be worked into the story resulting in a tension between the poetry and the prose not unusual in the Old Testament (cf. Genesis 9:20-27; Exodus 17:15; Joshua 10:12ff.). Also in the third place the outburst of anger which Moses displays is, according to Childs, a typical literary device with numerous parallels.⁴⁸ For Childs these incisive rebuttals leave no room for doubting the integrity of the chapter as a literary entity. Each seeks to indicate the reason why there might be slight roughness in style, but how nonetheless they have ostensibly become an indispensable part of the whole narrative.

By way of summary, the present investigator is persuaded that two factors can be seen to emerge from a canonical reading of Exodus 32. First of all it could be insisted that many of the perceived inconsistencies and contradictions inherent in the text are more apparent than real. One must beware of those scholars who are determined to fragment the passage by source analysis a priori. It may be that their zeal to postulate diverse traditions has led them to have either misread the material or excluded more obvious explanations of textual difficulties. To take an example: we have noted earlier that Kuenen believed that Moses' second

⁴⁸ Ibid.

intercession was redundant because God had already been appeased in the first. However it seems obvious from a cursory reading of the text that Delitzsch, Poole, and Nachmanides before them, more closely reflect the significance of vv. 30-34. They pointed out that verse 14 did not imply complete reconciliation but merely indicated an abortion of YHWH's threat of genocide. A second intercession was essential to obtain entire forgiveness. Similarly the perplexing destruction of the calf (v. 20) cannot be considered as evidence of a plurality of sources. Loewenstamm, we have seen, effectively demonstrated that the processes described to destroy the image reflect ancient parallels in Ugaritic and simply convey a vivid picture of total annihilation. Yet this understanding of the verse, without the Ugaritic substantiation, was offered as long ago as 1627 by Henry Ainsworth! A canonical reading of the text demands that one be aware of how the biblical material has been understood in every age. The task of exegesis must be concerned not only with a text's pre-history but also with its post-history. For, as one becomes cognizant of the history of a passage's interpretation, one stands on the shoulders of former exegetes in their sinfulness and confusion, and views the material in one's own sinfulness and discovers how others have understood.⁴⁹ Only as

⁴⁹The investigator is indebted to Professor Childs for this descriptive understanding of exegesis expressed in personal dialogue.

part of the ongoing process of interpretation, can exegesis be considered normative for the Christian Church.

A second factor emerging from a canonical reading of Exodus 32 is that those inconsistencies which have not been resolved ought to be allowed to function in their tensions. As two diverse traditions are placed in juxtaposition, frequently something altogether new emerges which is greater than the sum of its parts. In the case of the positioning of Exodus 32 within the book of Exodus, we have noticed that both the apostasy and the forensic material in which it is located, take on a heightened significance. The episode of the golden calf is no longer seen as the continuation of the historical narrative of Exodus 24 but is perceived over against the true pattern of worship described by the plans for the building of the tabernacle and held in contrast to the fruits of obedience which evoke the sovereign presence of YHWH. The apostasy of Exod. 32 elicits the threat of the termination of the divine presence.

Similarly within the chapter itself the contrast between the strength of Moses placed in apposition to the weakness of Aaron was observed by the Tannaitic writers, the Patristic writers and such notable moderns as Ewald, Dillmann, Loewenstamm and Childs. By fragmenting the text into its component parts much of the narrative's message is lost. A canonical reading of the text,

therefore, demands that one rid oneself of such presuppositions as predispose one to view the biblical material piecemeal and in discord with the intentions of the community responsible for putting it together in a manner conducive to their kerygmatic proclamation.

CHAPTER V

DETAILED STUDY OF EXODUS 32

Verses 1-6

Our story begins at the foot of Mount Sinai. Moses had been on the mountain for forty days and the people were impatient for his return. The mood in the Israelite camp was a restive one. The nation feared for its leader's safety and despairing of his return resorted to devices of its own creation. This is the context in which one must understand Moses' delay. The verb וַיִּבֹּשׁ appears to be a derivative of וָבוֹשׁ which carries with it the literal meaning of "to cause shame or disappointment." Here it is better translated "delayed" which is evidently the understanding of the word in Judg. 5:28. Moses' prolonged absence was causing concern in the camp. As a result the people gathered themselves together to Aaron (וַיִּקְרְבוּ אֶל־אַהֲרֹן). Both Theodotion and Aquila understand this as the calling together of an assembly (ἐκκλησιασθη) which may well be a proper understanding. The idea conveyed may be one of seditious intent as is the case of the phrase's use in Num. 16:3 and 20:2f. At any rate Moses' dismissal from consideration appears to be a manifestation of both ingratitude and unconcern. This seems to be the plain meaning of the text despite the objections

raised by the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan, Josephus and many midrashim. The people themselves were guilty of distrust and there is nothing to suggest that anything else was involved in distracting them from patiently awaiting Moses' return. One hesitates to attribute the statement וְשָׂהָה דְּאִישׁ אֶשֶׁר הָעֵלְנוּ דְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם any naïvete on the part of the people in believing that it was וְשָׂהָה דְּאִישׁ who was responsible for their deliverance from Egyptian bondage as opposed to the אֱלֹהִים that they demanded from the craft of Aaron. The context clearly suggests otherwise. This cannot be seen as an appeal for a new leadership, a surrogate for Moses. Rather it was a demand for a radically new security which they could only appreciate in the tangible form of deity. After all, if YHWH had not been able to protect Moses on the mountain, their precarious situation in the desert looked very grim indeed!

אֱלֹהִים is most commonly rendered "gods" by the commentators, and is even translated as such by Targum Onkelos. Associated with a plural verb, the noun indicates that the Israelites are not referring to YHWH but demand other deities. Yet singular rendering for אֱלֹהִים may not be impossible. Gesenius-Kautzsch cites a singular understanding of אֱלֹהִים coupled with a plural verb in Gen. 35:7.¹ However, it is more

¹W. Gesenius, Hebrew Grammar, ed. E. Kautzsch (Oxford: 1898), 145i.

usual for אֱלֹהִים to occur with a singular verb when its meaning is intended to be simply "God." And since YHWH is often seen vis-à-vis heathen gods, a rejection of the one true God may be understood as a desire for the others. In Exod. 32:1, 4, 8, and 23 the phrase in association with the image of the golden calf, seems to convey this idea of pagan deities.

Many have seen in Aaron's demand for gold an attempt, at most, to dissuade the people from their apostate enterprise or, at least, at procrastination. The Amoraim were eager to exonerate Aaron in view of the Christian polemic against him and the Middle Ages witnessed a rallying to the defense of the father of Israel's priesthood.² And in more recent times Calvin, Moncaeus, Gill, Henry, Delitzsch and Gore have tended to lend weight to the theory's respectability. Dillmann, on the other hand, has argued that Aaron had no other purpose than to acquire the gold. He simply needed it to make an image.³ Criteria either to substantiate or refute the argument are lacking in the text and one cannot be certain that Aaron was, in fact, employing delaying tactics. More important is to understand Aaron's acquiescence in the demands of the people in terms not of providing other gods, but of satisfying a dissident

²E.g. Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, Saadya Gaon and Moses Nachmanides.

³A. Dillmann, Die Bücher Exodus und Leviticus (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1880), p. 336.

nation with a tangible expression of deity. Despite the fact that the people's demand may have been for gods to replace YHWH,⁴ there could be no question in Aaron's mind of creating different deities for Israel, he could only consider constructing an image which related to YHWH.⁵ The narrative simply alludes to Aaron's demand for the gold that had been acquired from the Israelites' plunder of Egypt (Exod. 12:36).

וְהָיוּ לְאִזְמֵל presents no major difficulty despite the fact that the LXX finds it expedient to omit.⁶ It is quite feasible that Hebrew men could have worn earrings. Both Gen. 35:4 and Exod. 11:2 seem to indicate that this was the case. It is also clear that other ancient Near Eastern peoples did (cf. Judg. 8:24). However the point of the word's inclusion in the narrative of Exod. 32 may be a significant one. If וְהָיוּ לְאִזְמֵל (verse 2) is viewed as a parallel to כָּל-הָעָם (verse 3), it would underline the fact of the entire nation's culpability in the crime. All had sinned because all had played a part.

The designation לֵיל (verse 4) is usually translated "calf" as a convenience. It ought to be more

⁴Cf. Y. Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel (London: Geo. Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1961), p. 13.

⁵Cf. verse 5.

⁶Interestingly Theodotion retains the expression.

properly understood as a young bull of recent maturity. It is thus comprehended in other Old Testament passages for a לַגֵּל might be three years old (Gen. 15:9), give milk (Isa. 7:21),⁷ plough (Judg. 14:18; Jer. 31:18) or tread corn (Hos. 10:11; Jer. 50:11). Both Noth and McNeile⁸ suggest that the term in Exod. 32 is a derogatory one which emphasizes the diminutive size of the image. However, in view of the use of עֲגֹל in the scriptures, it is more likely that one is dealing with a mature beast, one with all the strength of a young animal in its prime. Further there is no reason to suppose that Aaron constructed a small image because there appeared to be an adequate amount of gold available. Besides, one cannot be completely sure that the image was made of solid gold.

וַיִּצַר אֶתֹּר בַּחֶרֶט has been variously understood. The problem arose in attempting to comprehend the function of חֶרֶט in the creation of an image which is described as עֲגֹל כְּסָפָה. חֶרֶט occurs in only one other Old Testament context. In Isaiah 8:1 the word appears to refer to a writing utensil, something of the nature of a stylus. This is how the term is understood

⁷Note the word is עֲגֹלָה in this instance.

⁸M. Noth, Exodus, op. cit., p. 248, and A. H. McNeile, op. cit., p. 205. Cf. B. W. Bacon, The Triple Tradition of the Exodus (Hartford: Student Publ. Co., 1894), p. 134.

by the LXX.⁹ But in what sense can a stylus be used on a molten image? There are two possibilities. The first has already been noted. Thomas Scott indicated that טרת was a type of polishing tool which presumably was used to smooth the rough edges of the cast. Another possibility, proposed by Dillmann, was that טרת more nearly represented an engraving or sculpturing tool.¹⁰ The idea suggested that the "Griffel" was utilized to do the detailed work on the calf after it had been melted down. Rylaarsdam refers to its use as an engraving tool after the cast had emerged from the mold.

Fundamental to the understanding of the function of טרת and the nature of עגל תכסף is the process of construction involved in ויער. That is to say, one may better understand the meaning of the phrase

ויער אתו בתרת by discerning the composition of the calf. If one considers עגל תכסף to imply a creation of solid gold cast from a mould, the translation of טרת as an engraving tool is problematic. Both Scott and Dillmann's explanations are somewhat forced. If, on the other hand, it is possible to consider the calf as comprising a wooden base overlain with gold then the function of an engraving tool may be more palatable. Quite a few eminent biblical scholars

⁹ טרת is translated by the LXX as τῆ
ὑραφίδι.

¹⁰ A. Dillmann, op. cit., pp. 336-337.

have opted for this second alternative and postulate an amalgam of wood and gold in the calf's composition. We have seen that this formulation is based not upon the image's construction in verse 4 but upon its destruction portrayed in verse 20. There the fact that the idol is burnt, ground and scattered led to theories not only of a structure of gold and wood, but of a composite narrative containing two diverse traditions, one of a wooden calf, the other of gold.¹¹ As we have discovered previously, the dilemma was circumvented by Loewenstamm's probing research in the 1960's which brought to light significant parallels between Moses' destruction of the golden calf and the Ugaritic myth of 'Anat's fatal battle with Mot. The evidence examined by Loewenstamm indicated that the terminology employed in Exod. 32:20, far from describing the destruction realistically, merely utilized an ancient stereotype to communicate the idol's total annihilation.

In accepting Loewenstamm's conclusions, it follows that the arguments for the composition of the golden calf comprising both wood and gold are robbed of any adequate substantiation. One can only take the phrase לְעֵץ וְזָהָב at face value. In other words,

¹¹See the earlier discussion of this issue in chapter III. Both Bennett (op. cit., p. 246) and Lehming (loc. cit.) appealed to different traditions in the Exodus account of the calf's destruction.

it must be recognized that the image was constructed from a casting mould.¹² This becomes the more interesting when one considers that Targum Onkelos understood טַרְטָר as נִסְיָן ("a casting mould"). Similarly the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan reads וַיִּזְרֵק יִתִּיה בְּשֹׁשְׁבִיל וְרָחַק יִתִּיה בְּטֹפֶסֶת (viz. "and he tied it in a cloak and cast it with a casting mould"). The emendation implied by the Onkelos rendering is probably not valid but neither may it be necessary. In the seventeenth century Poole, discontent with the meaning of טַרְטָר as a polishing tool and through the association of the word with the Arabic cognate نُطْرَان, suggested "pouch" as an alternative meaning for the Hebrew term.¹³ Poole's theory involved a deviation from the MT vocalization, that is to say instead of the segolate noun טַרְטָר, one reads טַרְטָר which denoted some kind of receptacle.¹⁴ Obviously he envisaged the receptacle as a crucible or casting mould. The problem however is that elsewhere the Hebrew term

¹²The NEB and the JB understand טַרְטָר as a casting mould in the sense of its rendering as "a bag" or "pouch." See J. P. Hyatt's discussion in Exodus (London: Oliphants, 1971), p. 304.

¹³The Arabic root *hrt* has the basic meaning of "to peel," to skin off the rind. The implication for the understanding of the Hebrew term would be to conceive of the designation referring originally to a pouch made of inner tree bark and later as different materials were used the designation remained. Cf. M. Noth, "Zur Anfertigung Des 'Goldenen Kalbes,'" Vetus Testamentum, IX (1959), 420.

¹⁴Cf. II Kgs. 5:23 & Isa. 3:22.

connotes something more akin to a pouch or cup, and to consider טַרְטָן in Exod. 32:4a as a casting mould may be a trifle forced.

Martin Noth has suggested an interesting alternative to the understanding of the phrase וַיִּצַק אֶת־הַזָּהָב טַרְטָן.¹⁵ He further elucidates upon the idea of טַרְטָן being a pouch since he, too, is of the opinion that neither a stylus nor a chisel, the two other possible translations, fits into the context of a עֲגֵל הַזֶּהָב. Presumably a molten image is poured as opposed to being fashioned with a tool. In defining the word as a pouch, Noth is careful to point out that the indication in II Kgs. 5:23 is that the receptacle may be of large dimensions since it was used in that context to carry a talent of silver. And since the pouch had the primary function of transporting the precious metal, Noth surmised that the author of Exod. 32:4a simply wanted to convey the idea that Aaron carried away the gold which had been collected from the people in order to carry on the work of making the image in some place hidden from their eyes. Or it might have been the desire to protect the ornaments from possible theft that prompted Aaron to have them removed from the scene. Either way, Noth is fully convinced that the phrase ought to be translated,

¹⁵M. Noth, VT, op. cit., 419-422.

"und er (Aaron) schnürte es (das Gold) in einem Beutel zusammen."¹⁶

There is no question that Noth's hypothesis represents a viable possibility in comprehending the significance of the phrase וַיִּצַר אֶת־בַּגְּדָיו, and given Noth's ingenious reasoning behind the binding of the gold in a bag one can no longer dismiss his translation with any ease. Dillmann's earlier observation: "Die Erklärung und er band es in den Beutel...taugt im Zusammenhang nichts" is no longer appropriate.¹⁷ It appears evident that וַיִּצַר can be much better understood as a receptacle or purse than as some kind of stylus or engraving tool. The latter idea is inappropriate in the context of a molten calf. And simply by changing the vocalization of the MT, it is possible to discover a more satisfying alternative. Further, in the comparative passage of II Kgs. 5:23 not only does the word וַיִּצַר recur, so too does the entire expression וַיִּצַר בַּגְּדָיו...וַיִּצַר and therefore may represent a parallel use of the verb. If this is so, the verb in Exod. 32:4a, וַיִּצַר might be more correctly understood as coming from the root וַיִּצַר, meaning "to tie" or "to bind." The expression, then, could well convey the impression that Aaron gathered the gold together and bound it all in a bag

¹⁶Ibid., p. 422.

¹⁷A. Dillmann, op. cit., p. 337.

and later made from it a molten calf. It also might be possible to consider the receptacle as a casting mould if one defined טַרְסָא in more general terms. The occurrences of the Hebrew term are too few to properly reject this understanding of the verse. Either way the translations are a decided improvement on the idea of Aaron fashioning the calf with an engraving tool. One must concede, nonetheless, that the ambiguous nature of verse 4a is due to the brevity of the account of the calf's construction and that the writer is much more concerned to demonstrate Aaron's complicity in Israel's crime than deal with the building process per se.

Both the LXX and the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan place the formula "These are your gods, O Israel..." in Aaron's mouth possibly because he is already established as the primary actor in the verse and possibly because the proclamation was addressed to Israel. However, Theodotion, Aquila and Symmachus all retain the MT rendering which places the expression in the mouths of the people, viz. "they said."¹⁸ This is possibly more original since in the following verse, Aaron is seen as proclaiming a feast to YHWH. It may have been that a small number of leaders thus addressed the rest of the nation: אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. Aaron's role in the apostasy is

¹⁸Interestingly Targum Neofiti goes as far as attributing the building of the calf itself to the people vis-à-vis Aaron.

clearly not so much that of an innovator as it is a compromiser in the nation's crime.

אלהינו must obviously be translated as a plural noun since it is associated with a plural demonstrative pronoun אלהינו and a plural verb עלו. Attempts to explain it as a plural of majesty have been less than convincing. S. R. Driver, Cole and Allis¹⁹ have all postulated the possibility of its being polytheistic speech either in the sense that the image of a calf symbolized more than one deity in ancient Near Eastern pantheons or that through this one image many others would inevitably follow. Cassuto argued that the people made the calf divine by their worship of it and that it co-existed with YHWH. Since the true God had not been fully forsaken, the plural formula was used to depict the gods in partnership. However, more appropriate is the ancient understanding of Rabbi Johanan who simply believed that Israel lusted after many gods despite the fact that only one calf was built.²⁰

The most conclusive argument for a plural understanding of the phrase אלהינו אלהינו ישראל in

¹⁹S. R. Driver, op. cit., p. 349; A. Cole, op. cit., p. 215; Allis, op. cit., p. 92.

²⁰Thomas Scott was another who held to this opinion. He argued that the significance of the plural construction emphasized Israel's desire for heathen gods. See earlier discussion in chapter II.

verse 4 is that the entire formula "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Israel" recurs in I Kings 12:28. In that context Jeroboam had just erected two calf images at the sanctuaries of Dan and Bethel in order to avert the need of his subjects to engage in a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. These northern sanctuaries became the ecclesiastical centres for the nation of Israel. Obviously the formula in I Kgs 12:28 demands a plural rendering.²¹ Although the equation between Exod. 32:4 and I Kgs. 12:28 appears to have been first noted by Poole three hundred years ago, it remained the achievement of Ewald at the end of the last century to infer interdependence between the texts. Since the phrase made perfect sense in I Kings 12:28 and seemed inappropriate in the Exodus narrative, Ewald suggested that Exod. 32 was employed as a polemic against the bull-cults at Dan and Bethel. Indeed, it seems, the writer actually invented the story of the Aaronide calf to set a precedent by which to condemn the apostate cults. More recent commentators²² believe that the narrative of the golden calf reflects an historical nucleus and that Israel was guilty of idolatry at the

²¹To my knowledge only Poole in the seventeenth century wanted to translate both verses (II Kgs. 12:28 & Exod. 32:4) in the singular. "This is your God." He understood the phrase in both instances to mean, "Look at this calf (or these calves) and remember the one true God! However, evidence to substantiate this understanding is singularly lacking.

²²E.g. W. Beyerlin and B. S. Childs.

foot of Mount Sinai. It is more likely that the event of the golden calf was utilized in a later tirade against the northern sanctuaries and more effectively to condemn the bull-worship of Jeroboam's reign. The formula, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt," more appropriate in I Kgs. 12:28, was deliberately placed in the context of the Aaronide calf.

Significantly the nation attributes to the heathen deity or deities, symbolized by the golden calf, the accomplishment of deliverance from Egypt (אֲשֶׁר הֵעֲלֶךְךָ
מִמִּצְרַיִם). It is interesting to note that even in the nation's apostasy, the people sought a god who acted in history and recognized in the calf not only one who would lead them to a land of promise (Exod. 32:1), but one who was sovereign over their past history.²³ It is apparent that the god who intervened in the ongoing process of human history was deeply rooted in Israelite religion.²⁴

Most commentators, both ancient and modern, see in verse 5 an attempt to mitigate or minimize Aaron's

²³S. R. Driver, op. cit., p. 350.

²⁴It may have been because the calf symbolized heathen deities that enabled Israel to attribute their deliverance to them prior to the actual construction of the golden calf. It is also possible that for some the image did become an end in itself as Kaufmann has pointed out, "The fatuous idolater does not hesitate to ascribe to his fetish events that took place even before the fetish was made!" (Y. Kaufmann, op. cit., p. 131n).

responsibility in Israel's crime. It will certainly help us to better explain the future high priest's activity in the matter. The basic problem revolves around Aaron's motivation in proclaiming a feast to YHWH. Several theories have been propounded. Some of the Targumim, as we have seen, came to Aaron's defense. Both the fragments and Pseudo-Jonathan narrate that Hur had been slain and fear seized Aaron so that he consented to build the calf. Neofiti, on the other hand, did not speak of Hur's death, only of his sacrificing to the idol whereupon Aaron sought to regain control of the situation by calling for a feast to YHWH. Many of the Amoraim cite Hur's supposed death as the phenomenon that thrust Aaron into using diversion tactics to hinder the progress of the apostasy. The Middle Ages generally sought to corroborate this as the reason for Aaron's proclamation of a feast. And the motivation of fear was represented again in the NEB's translation of this text in which an appeal is made to the Syriac version.

Biblical evidence to substantiate Aaron's fear of an insurgent mob is not forthcoming although it must always remain a mystery why Hur disappeared from the Exodus narratives after occupying the prominent role of joint leader with Aaron in Exodus 24:14. Lack of biblical support, however, may not be adequate reason for dismissing this entrenched tradition which excuses Aaron on the grounds of fear. Fortunately, there are other

alternative explanations of Aaron's enigmatic behaviour. Alan Cole has suggested that Israel's future high priest exhibited naïve theological insight and that the call for a feast to YHWH was blatantly apostate.²⁵ But given his position in the nation, his role in the exodus itself and his close relationship to Moses, is this a fair conclusion to draw? Or could Aaron really have believed that the calf represented YHWH as S. R. Driver and Childs have suggested?²⁶ Or could it simply have been an attempt by later redactors to mitigate Aaron as McNeile seemed to indicate?²⁷

In the opinion of the present investigator, by far the most satisfactory thesis to account for Aaron's motivation in calling a feast to YHWH was that advanced by Abraham Ibn Ezra, Moncaeus, Harrelson, Cassuto, Noth et al.²⁸ Their basic hypothesis lay in the fact that Aaron's intention was essentially to "fashion a vacant throne" for YHWH. The wisdom of so doing was dubious, to say the least, but may have emerged in the uneasy situation as a matter of expediency. Aaron cannot escape

²⁵A. Cole, op. cit., p. 216.

²⁶S. R. Driver, loc. cit.; B. S. Childs, Exodus, op. cit., p. 567.

²⁷A. H. McNeil, op. cit., p. 205.

²⁸Abraham Ibn Ezra, cited in Ramban, op. cit., pp. 552-553; Moncaeus, cited by B. S. Childs, Exodus, op. cit., p. 577; W. J. Harrelson, op. cit., p. 489; U. Cassuto, Exodus, op. cit., pp. 408, 413; M. Noth, Exodus, op. cit., p. 247.

condemnation for his unfortunate role in the apostasy however unwitting it may have been, but it is difficult to imagine Aaron blatantly creating a replacement for YHWH! Undoubtedly verse 4 implicated him in Israel's great sin. Yet had his motivation been with evil intent, his lack of punishment in verses 21ff. would hardly be sensible. Aaron's sin was one of a compromise which lacked both wisdom and discernment. It is apparent that, for some, what was intended as a throne became an actual deity.²⁹

The heart of the apostasy is described in verse 6 for here is the actual worship of the calf (or of the deities symbolized by the image). In response to Aaron's proclamation of a feast to YHWH, the people rose up early the following day and sacrificed before the golden calf. There is some debate whether the reference to offering burnt offerings and bringing peace offerings is to Aaron or the people. In the LXX each of the verbs is translated in the singular with an obvious allusion to Aaron (ὁρθρίσας, ἀγεβίβασεν, προσήνεγκεν). And, in the latter part of the verse, the people are specified as the actors whereas they are not at the beginning of the

²⁹The concept of thrones for divine beings cannot be considered too subtle for ancient Israel. The phenomenon was not uncommon in the liturgy of ancient Near Eastern cults. In the texts of Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Phoenicia and Syria, gods were frequently represented as standing upon bulls. And it was not unknown in Egypt that animals, especially snakes, formed a pictorial 'seat' on which a greater god was placed.

verse. So that one might be forgiven for believing that Aaron's role is described in opposition to that of the people's. Aaron rose early and prepared for the sacrifices while the people feasted and rose up to play. It could also be argued that the MT reflects a later hand which sought to exculpate Aaron from participation in the worship of the golden calf. However, despite Lehming's contention that this was so,³⁰ it has remained the general consensus of the Church from ancient times that verse 6 in its entirety refers to the activity of Israel. The LXX stands alone in rendering the first three verbs as singular. Both Theodotion and Aquila retain the sense of the MT by ascribing the offerings to the people--though they attribute the early morning rising to Aaron. That is to say, only the first of the three verbs in question is a singular verb in these two Greek translations. They agree with the LXX in saying "and he (Aaron) rose up early on the morrow....," but since this is an entirely innocent expression compared to the subsequent acts associated with sacrifice, this agreement must be considered very tentative. On the crucial question of culpability in the worship of the calf image, the other Greek versions side with the MT in implicating the people in the sacrifice. Interestingly Symmachus remains most faithful to the MT in translating all three verbs as

³⁰See detailed discussion of Lehming in chapter III.

plurals. The witness of commentators in every age accords with this understanding of the text which sees Aaron as not so much corrupter but as one corrupted:

Auch hier (v 6) ist in LXX ὁρθρίσας, ἐνεβλίσας, προσήνευκεν auf Aaron bezogen; aber ebenso unrichtig wie v. 4, denn das Bestreben, Aaron als den Verführten, nicht als Verführer darzustellen leuchtet aus der ursprünglichen Anlage der Erzählung hervor, und ist nicht erst durch die Sopherim hineincorrigirt.³¹

After the more liturgical aspects of worship were formalized, the people continued their celebration by feasting and "playing" (v 6b). The expression לדב'ן לש'ן has been taken to be a euphemism for immoral orgies. Rabbi Akiba alluded to the disgusting nature of the nation's sin as implied by the phrase. Similarly Rabbi Tanhuma ben Abba, among other Amoraim saw in these words a summary of Israel's delinquency.³² The Jerusalem Targumim I, II and III along with Neofiti understood the expression as "sporting in foreign worship." Modern interpreters have also depicted Israel's "playing" in terms of revelry or reckless abandonment.³³ The mood of orgy is intensified rather cleverly by the writer who depicted the nation in "a burst of frenzied activity...achieved by a skillful piling up of verbs."³⁴

³¹A. Dillmann, op. cit., p. 338.

³²Cf. the earlier discussion of these in chap. II.

³³E.g. J. C. Rylaarsdam, op. cit., p. 1066.

³⁴B. S. Childs, Exodus, op. cit., p. 566.

Verses 7-14

Despite the fact that verses 7-14 are seen as an interruption of the story of verses 1-6, 15ff.,³⁵ it is clear in the section's present context that the mood of the narrative shifts as the scene changes from the riotous behaviour at the foot of the mountain to the solitary calmness at its summit. From a comparison with the Deuteronomic account of the same incident which reiterates only Moses' perspective of the apostasy, the narrator of Exod. 32 deliberately places the two pictures in apposition to highlight the contrast between them. Moses is told abruptly to descend from the mountain: יָרַד. The expansion of the phrase in the LXX (βάδιζε τὸ τάχος, κατὰβηθὲ ἐντεῦθεν) seems unwarranted. If anything this rendering more closely reflects the Deuteronomic narrative. Other additions to the phrase presented in the Targumim are midrashic in nature and are without literary foundation.

Interesting is the reference to יָדָו in verse 7.³⁶ Seen in the context of Israel forsaking the God of their fathers and proclaiming before the calf-image: יָלֵךְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ (v 4), YHWH is dissociating himself from the people whom he had delivered from Egypt. As Israel no longer acknowledged YHWH as

³⁵E.g. B. W. Bacon, op. cit., p. 135. See full discussion in chapter III.

³⁶Targum Neofiti omits the possessive pronoun.

their God, so their covenant-making God no longer acknowledged them as his people. So in his address to Moses, YHWH referred to Israel as "your people." It cannot be considered an attempt to implicate Moses in the apostasy as Calvin has suggested.³⁷ The nation had condemned itself as verses 7 and 8 point out. "Israel has corrupted herself. The evidence is marshalled in words from her own mouth."³⁸ The proclamation is clearly attributed here to the people.³⁹ The guilt is wholly theirs. Israel's sin was the flagrant disregard of the second commandment--and the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan is careful to spell out the entire law in its text of Exod. 32. Notably each aspect of the apostasy is spelt out--the corruption, the forsaking, the disregard of the law, the creation of an idol, the worship of it, the sacrificing to it and the heretical pronouncement regarding it. And the nation is held responsible at each stage of the crime. Even the building of the image is attributed to the people, though it is possible that "they" might be considered to be any number of people vis-à-vis Moses. If this is the case, Aaron would be simply included with the general population who were responsible for the construction of the golden calf even though Aaron did the

³⁷J. Calvin, op. cit., p. 999.

³⁸B. S. Childs, Exodus, op. cit., p. 567.

³⁹Cf. the discussion on v. 4b.

actual building.⁴⁰ As one might expect in view of our discussion on verse 6, the LXX omits the reference to the people sacrificing to the calf-image. The verbs יָעַל and יָשַׁל in verse 6 (MT) were rendered in the singular by the LXX implying the activity of Aaron. Here where the indication is that the people sacrificed to the idol, rather than understanding it in the same way as their construction of the calf, the LXX^B chose to omit the phrase.

Verse 9 in its entirety is omitted by the LXX although it is included by Theodotion, Aquila and Symmachus who, for the most part, render an exact word for word equivalent with the MT. However, it is possible that the LXX reflects an original text into which v. 9 was later interpolated from Deut. 9:13. Whether or not this is the case, its present position in the chapter helps to graphically depict YHWH's perspective of Israel's apostasy. The phrase עַל-אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה also occurs in Exod. 33:3, 5; 34:9 and Deut. 9:6, 13. Significant, perhaps, is the fact that its sole occurrence is within this major unit of the book of Exodus (chh. 32-34) and the Deuteronomic account of the construction of the golden calf. Phrases similar to it are evident, however, in

⁴⁰This problem recurs in v. 35b. Although Aaron was the craftsman, his work was at the behest of the nation and in that sense Israel can be said to have made the calf. They bear part responsibility. This could be the idea in verse 8 when YHWH outlines the nation's apostate activity during Moses' absence.

Chronicles and Jeremiah. Cassuto indicates the meaning to be "impossible to instill new ideas into their obdurate mentality."⁴¹ Keil specifically relates it to its context: "a people with a hard neck that will not bend to the commandment of God."⁴² The phrase indicated a rigidity or inflexibility on the part of the people, something a little more forceful than pride which is the rendering of the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan. Essentially the scriptural metaphor is that of an ox continually unresponsive to the tugging of a rein. The term would be aptly translated "stubborn."

YHWH proceeds to reveal to Moses his plan to exterminate Israel (v 10). This threat of genocide appears to be real enough. The suggestion by Calvin, Delitzsch and Cole⁴³ that God was merely testing Moses cannot be sustained and does an injustice to the narrative. Several Targumim including Onkelos, Neofiti and Pseudo-Jonathan understand YHWH's command, אֲמַרְתָּ לָהֶם לֹא תִשָּׁעַר, as an explicit restraint upon Moses in interceding for the nation (אֲמַרְתָּ לָהֶם לֹא תִשָּׁעַר בְּעוֹתָךְ לְפָנָיו, Targum Onkelos). The implication, elucidated by later rabbinic writers, was to effectively leave the way open

⁴¹U. Cassuto, op. cit., p. 415.

⁴²C. F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch, II (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publ. Co., n.d.), p. 223.

⁴³J. Calvin, op. cit., p. 1000; F. Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 224; A. Cole, op. cit., p. 217.

for such intercession.⁴⁴ Childs has followed up this point and indicates that the promise to Moses represented an attempt to elicit argument from him on Israel's behalf.⁴⁵ Kaufmann, too, has understood it as a qualification of the threat of genocide.⁴⁶ The basic idea, then, was rather than YHWH actually expressing a desire to be left alone, he was inviting Moses to speak pardon for the nation!

Nonetheless, it seems to the present investigator that the peshat of verse 10 and the context in which it finds itself suggests otherwise. So intent was YHWH's wrath to his people (θυμωθεὶς ὄργη in the LXX) that he was engaged in a real struggle to do them injury. The promise given to Abram (Gen. 12:2) was in danger of abrogation and of being replaced by a new promise to Moses. It is important to point out that what was at stake here was not an extension of an already existing treaty but a wholly new covenant.⁴⁷ And despite Keil's contention that the promise to the Patriarchs would be fulfilled through Moses, it seems evident that Israel's election, as we have come to understand Israel, was at stake. A nation descended from

⁴⁴See discussion in chapter II.

⁴⁵B. S. Childs, Exodus, op. cit., p. 567.

⁴⁶y. Kaufmann, op. cit., p. 131.

⁴⁷C. F. Keil et al., op. cit., pp. 223-224; cf. B. S. Childs, Exodus, loc. cit.

Moses would have been a different entity and not Israel per se. This is clearly perceived in another portion of scripture when, in a not dissimilar crisis, YHWH indicated that he would make of Moses a nation stronger and more numerous than Israel at that time (Num. 14:12). Interestingly Targum Neofiti enlarged Exod. 32:10 to include this perspective of Num. 14:12.

Verse 11 marks the start of Moses' disputation with YHWH. Despite the seemingly conclusive finality of YHWH's declaration, Moses seeks to intercede on Israel's behalf. Obviously the significant fact emerging from this intercession is that it resulted in a repentance and retraction of YHWH's intent (v. 14). It seems, therefore, to the present writer that the section comprising verses 11-14 reads as a unit in response both to the proclamation of YHWH's intent to destroy Israel (vv. 9-10) and the preceding restiveness on the part of YHWH wherein he elucidates the nation's crime (vv 7-8). Moses was reacting both to assuage YHWH's pain and to pose a theological challenge which called into question the feasibility of God's proposed action. Moses accused God of being subject to his impassioned anger (v 12b). What he intended to do was both illogical (v 12a) and inconsistent with his nature (v 13). The perception of the sin (vv. 7-8) and the emotive response to it (vv 9-10) are inextricably bound together. Moses seeks to relate to both. On the one hand Moses never seeks to justify or

excuse Israel's evil crime and on the other he moves offensively to accuse YHWH of evil.⁴⁸ Interestingly the writer is juxtaposing Israel's sin with YHWH's פָּנָה. And whether one might justifiably expect Moses to seek forgiveness for Israel's behaviour and the nation's corollary repentance, one encounters the strange anomaly of YHWH's repentance!

At this point it seems clear to our understanding of the text that no inherent contradiction exists between the two 'intercessions' of Moses in verses 11-14 and verses 30-34. The purpose in the latter was explicitly to seek atonement on Israel's behalf. The present unit (vv 11-14) depicts Moses as merely placating God's wrath, that is to say Moses sought to establish atonement on YHWH's behalf! The intercessions reflect different concerns and cannot be considered mutually exclusive. Kuenen's conclusion that one of the prayers was redundant⁴⁹ cannot be substantiated. Such a thesis is a misreading of the biblical material. The theory offered by Nachmanides better reflects a strict exegesis of the text.⁵⁰ He suggested that entire forgiveness was not

⁴⁸The designation of one source for verses 7-14 is familiar to us through the commentaries of most of the earlier critics and not a few contemporary scholars who include Noth, Lewy, Beyerlin, Hyatt, Bailey and Childs. See Appendix C.

⁴⁹A. Kuenen, The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined, trans. J. W. Colenso (London: n.p.), p. 99.

⁵⁰Moses Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, II: Exodus, trans. by Rabbi C. B. Chavel (New York: Shilo Pub. Ho., Inc., 1973), pp. 549-550.

obtained in vv. 11-14 and further intercession was required to effect such forgiveness.

It appears to the present writer that the emphasis of the section comprising verses 11-14 is not upon Israel's forgiveness at all! Israel's repentance and consequent forgiveness are not at stake. On the contrary, the text clearly indicates that the concern is with YHWH's repentance (□π, vv 12, 14). It was only after Israel's acknowledgment of its sin that forgiveness could properly be sought on the nation's behalf (vv 30-34). Hence Moses' immediate reaction on Sinai was to avert the wrath of YHWH. It was not to be assured of Israel's forgiveness per se. In this, Nachmanides' thesis must be defended. Only after Moses had returned to the camp, meted out punishment and called for renewed commitment was he in a position to entreat YHWH on Israel's behalf. The two intercessory episodes, far from indicating the duplication of independent sources, are more reasonably viewed as complementary and by either one hand or a very clever redactor who formulated a way to synthesize two variant traditions.

However, we have seen that verses 11-14 are most frequently designated a deuteronomic redaction by the moderns on the basis of the incongruity that exists between those verses and verses 30-34. But in challenging the basic assumption that such an incongruity does in fact exist, the present writer wishes to affirm the very

real possibility of a single writer for both intercessory episodes in Exodus 32. There appears to be no clear justification proposed by any scholar, ancient or modern, that would lead us to recognize two variant sources at this point in the narrative.

Let us now look at this section (vv 11-14) in more detail to examine its message. It is obviously an intent of the writer to display Moses as a great intercessor, filling the void between YHWH and his people. Moses' disregard of YHWH's aspiration to be left alone is understood as an attempt to placate the wrath of an angry God. The expression, יָחַל כְּפָה אֶת-פָּנֵי יְהוָה, can be literally understood as "stroking" the face of YHWH for the purpose of appeasing his anger,⁵¹ or from the Arabic sense of "making sweet" the face of YHWH.⁵² The Hebrew verb carries the idea of appeasement, that is to say to induce one "to show favour in place of wrath and chastisement."⁵³ The idea is similar to the Arabic

⁵¹A. Dillmann: "Und er streichelte oder glattete das Antlitz Jahve's," Die Bucher Exodus und Leviticus (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1880), p. 338. Also C. F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch, II, trans. J. Martin (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, reprint 1971), p. 224. Also H. J. Keyser, A Commentary on the Second Book of the Law called Exodus (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. Ho., 1940), p. 418.

⁵²S. R. Driver, The Book of Exodus (Cambridge: University Press, 1918), p. 351.

⁵³F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), p. 318.

concept, making the face of another pleasant. It is to be comprehended as entreating mercy or seeking to conciliate either by means of sacrifices (I Sam. 13:12; I Kgs. 13:6) or by intercession (Jer. 26:19). However the meaning of πλπ may be considered "to be weak or sick" (Judg. 16:7ff.), and in the Pi'el stem it would carry the idea of "making weak" or "to soften." Hence with פ'ן as its object, it has been taken to mean "endeavouring to calm and soften an angry countenance."⁵⁴

Moses' intercession begins in the interrogative form: למה יתורה יתורה אפך, viz. "Why, O Lord, does your anger glow?" The intensity of YHWH's anger is conveyed appropriately in the LXX by the expression θυμωθεὶς ὀργῇ. Although some emendation to the text has occurred in the Syriac and the Samaritan Pentateuch, the primary sense of the MT is maintained. Their contribution appears to be away from the interrogative form of the MT to the more direct mood of the jussive: אל יהיה אל יתור אפך, literally "Nay, O Lord, let not your anger be heated!"

In describing Israel as עמך אשר הוצאת מארץ מצרים בכח גדול וביד חזקה, Moses is reminding YHWH that they are, after all is said and done, his people. They are a people with a special covenantal relationship with himself, a people into whose history he

⁵⁴U. Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Exodus (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), p. 415.

has reached redemptively. Moses' appeal was to the effect that, in view of all that had been accomplished in the past and climactically in the deliverance from Egyptian bondage, YHWH's work ought not to be in vain! Both the LXX and Targum Neophiti betray the influence of Deut. 9:29 in rendering "your outstretched arm" in place of the MT's "a strong hand." Targum Neophiti also inserts the word "redeemed" in describing what YHWH has done for his people.

In verse 12 Moses continues his argumentation by appealing to the vindication of the divine name. If YHWH does not 'repent' for his people's sake, then perhaps for his own sake he might! Here the Israelite leader ventures to suggest that the Egyptians⁵⁵ would charge YHWH with failure to protect his people and cast aspersions upon his nature claiming him to be a mischievous deity, a divine Zeus who delivered the Israelites "with evil intent." Moses' second rebuke again takes the form of a question:□'רצח רחמנא רחמנא. In contradistinction both the LXX and the Syriac versions read לנ[ר] in place of רחמנא in the MT. The effect, as we saw previously, is to transform the interrogation into an entreaty by use of the jussive mood. Interestingly, the Syriac remains consistent with its

⁵⁵Targum Pseudo-Jonathan cannot resist the temptation, it seems, to define the Egyptians in this verse as those "remaining." Presumably he had in mind those who had not been destroyed at the Sea.

rendering of verse 11. By contrast, the LXX does not. Moses' arguments to turn away the divine anger appear to be couched in stronger language in these two versions. Targum Neophiti adds the entreaty, "I pray" to emphasize further Moses' petition.

Much of the force of the argument was Moses' accusation that the destruction of the nation, if carried out, would be a negation of the covenant relationship and subsequently evil. Despite the attempts of Dillmann and Targum Neophiti⁵⁶ to explain the evil not so much in terms of YHWH's intent as in terms of befallen disaster, it is unnecessary to detract from the crudeness of Moses' accusation. Moses was not only arraigning YHWH's intended behaviour as wrong-doing, he was calling upon God to repent (□π)! The destruction perceived in verse 12 takes up the idea of לכלתם evident in verse 10. It is apparent that the existence of the nation qua nation was at stake since its destruction was to be "from off the face of the earth." The reference to the slaughter in the mountains is undoubtedly an allusion to Sinai, although Targum Pseudo-Jonathan cites Tabor, Hermon and Sirion as well.

Based, then, primarily upon the illogicality of YHWH's proposed course of action, Moses rises to challenge his God to desist from pursuing it. "Turn

⁵⁶A. Dillmann understands this as "...sondern mit Unheil im Gefolge," loc. cit. Also Neophiti renders verse 12: "For their evil has been their coming out."

(נח)!" he exclaims, "repent (נח)!" Interestingly these two imperatives are placed in apposition to emphasize the desire of Moses that YHWH will, in fact, change his mind! This is the only conclusion which the present writer can arrive at based on a plain reading of the material. Other interpretations and explanations of the enigma of God changing his mind or his ability to do evil by acting contrary to his nature appear somewhat forced and do injustice to the peshat of the text. Similarly, to dismiss God's repentance as an anachronistic anthropopathism is to examine the interpretive possibilities less than seriously. In this regard Alan Cole's suggestion that the text's meaning is "not that God changed his mind....(but) that he now embarked on a different course of action from that already suggested as a possibility,"⁵⁷ is simply not adequate. The present writer believes that the indication is clear by the use of two verbs that a radical "about turn" in a state of affairs and a genuine change of mind is involved here. Were this not so, the expressed threat of genocide in verse 10 would be a cruel mockery of the divine intention! So although St. Augustine might be correct in saying that "an unexpected change in the things which God has put in his own power is called repentance,"⁵⁸ it is nonetheless

⁵⁷S. R. Driver, op. cit., p. 352. Also A. Cole, Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary (London: Tyn-
dale Press, 1973), p. 217.

⁵⁸Cited in C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 225.

true to say that in Exodus 32 the element of changing from an evil course of action is also involved.

The LXX misses the full force of Moses' call for repentance by rendering this section of the verse: ἐλέως
γενοῦ ἐπὶ τῇ κακίᾳ τοῦ λαοῦ σου. The implication of the LXX appears to be away from the concept of "repentance." Instead, Moses is depicted soliciting YHWH for mercy. The outcome in verse 14, according to the Greek translation, is that YHWH is appeased! There is nothing in the LXX of the connotation of grievous sorrow for the ill done or planned so prevalent in the MT.⁵⁹ In place of repentance the translator is introducing the idea of propitious atonement. In other words, he perceives Moses' intercession as an attempt to rectify the sagging relationship between God and his people. In view of the concern of Moses' second intercession (vv 30-34) for forgiveness and atonement, it seems unnecessary to postulate this as the interest of the writer in these verses. It is conceivable that there may be a subtle play between the word "repent" (נָחַם) in verse 12 and the word for "leave alone" (נָחַם) in verse 10.

The heart of Moses' argumentation has still to come in verse 13. He has appealed to the illogicality of YHWH's proposed action and called for his repentance.

⁵⁹ F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), p. 637.

Moses is now ready, so to speak, for the most persuasive argument of all, the coup de grâce. He reminds YHWH of the covenant which he had established with the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Israel.

In dealing with Moses' appeal to the patriarchs in his confrontation with God, the ancients resorted to all kinds of rational explanations. Several of the Amoraim believed that the patriarchs were called upon to actually add 'bodies' to the righteous number of Israelites already in the camp. Others claimed that the righteousness of these earlier generations had been stored up and the accumulated merit could be utilized by their progeny.⁶⁰ A not dissimilar understanding of the appeal to the patriarchs can also be encountered in the modern commentary on Exodus by Cassuto.⁶¹ The Amoraic haggadist, Rabbi Levi, by contrast, understands Moses as demanding to know how God could justify his broken promises to the patriarchs in time to come. In this Rabbi Levi comes closest to a strict exegesis of the text. The issue which Moses raised was that of YHWH's fidelity to the covenant which he had entered into with Abraham, Isaac and Israel.

Although the terms of the covenant were couched in bilateral terms, viz. "if you will..., then I will..., "

⁶⁰See fuller discussion in chapter II.

⁶¹U. Cassuto, op. cit., p. 416.

YHWH's commitment to the covenant was not dependent upon the continuous obedience of the nation of Israel. This fact cannot be over-emphasized for it represents the very core of Moses' argument and is the immeasurable greatness of the redemptive story of the apostasy of the golden calf. Were the perpetuity of the covenant dependent upon the faithfulness of Israel (or any people), that covenant would have been doomed from the beginning for any occasion that revealed the nation outside the will of its God would have endangered a rather tenuous treaty! What a pattern it would be for the new covenant between Christ and his church! But it is precisely when his people are faithless that God stands by his covenantal promises. St. Paul is able to instruct young Timothy, "if we are faithless, he remains faithful--for he cannot deny himself."⁶² Indeed, the overwhelming implication of Genesis 15 where YHWH seals the Abrahamic covenant is that he alone binds himself to the treaty. Abraham is not required to walk through the pieces of slaughtered beasts despite the fact that this was usually the role of the vassal and not the suzerain in treaty-making.

In reminding YHWH of his unconditional commitment to the covenant which he established with particular individuals (viz. Abraham, Isaac and Israel) Moses was bringing to mind covenantal promises which would not be fulfilled if he destroyed the people of Israel. Hence

⁶² II Tim. 2:13.

the covenant made with the patriarchs stood as a guarantee of YHWH's continuing grace toward Israel.

Although all the Targumim retain the slightly unfamiliar trilogy of Abraham, Isaac and Israel which we have in the MT, both the Samaritan Pentateuch and the LXX render it in its more common form with "Jacob" in place of "Israel." The reason for the enigmatic MT rendering cannot be ascertained. The awkward form may reflect a more original text but in view of the more common usage of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob throughout Old Testament literature, the LXX and Samaritan Pentateuch may very well reflect a more accurate text.

The actual promise to which Moses refers concerning the proliferation of the nation and the occupation of land is greatly enhanced in both the LXX and the Samaritan Pentateuch by the addition of superlatives. The Greek reads: "I will greatly multiply (πολυπληθυνω)....as the stars of heaven for multitude (τῶ πληθει)." This latter expression is found three times in the MT of Deuteronomy where the word לְעֹלָם is used. And to make better sense of the MT, the LXX, Samaritan Pentateuch and Syriac versions supply a pronominal suffix to give the final clause of verse 13 proper completion. With the pronoun, it better reads: "they shall inherit it for ever (לְעֹלָם לְבָנֵי)." לְבָנֵי

Moses' appeal has ended and this section comes to a close in verse 14 with a statement to the effect that

YHWH repented of the evil which he had purposed to do to the people. Naturally the major problem of this verse is dealing with the concept of YHWH's repentance. We encountered it initially in verse 12. One can understand the concept as merely an idiom of the period.⁶³ Or, with Calvin, it might be defined in terms of appeasement, that is to say it is "not because he retracts in himself what he has once decreed, but because he does not execute the sentence he has pronounced."⁶⁴ Yet another possibility might be that there was not so much a change in God's purpose as there was a change in men's behaviour which evoked a corresponding change in God's attitude toward them.⁶⁵

The problem of the interpretation of verse 14 is highlighted by Childs. His comment seems to capture all the fears of the consequences of a wrong interpretation of the text. "If this sentence is read by itself," he writes, "it makes the God of Israel as arbitrary as Zeus."⁶⁶ Therein lies our enigma!

⁶³H. J. Keyser, op. cit., p. 418.

⁶⁴J. Calvin, The Pentateuch (Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers & Authors Inc., n.d.).

⁶⁵S. R. Driver, loc. cit.; A. Cole, loc. cit. The obvious problem with this alternative is that there was no change in the people's behaviour.

⁶⁶B. S. Childs, Exodus: A Commentary (London: S.C.M. Press, 1974), p. 568.

The word "repentance" (viz. Niph' stem of נָחַם) connotes sorrow, grief or pity. It is "to be sorry, suffer grief, moved to pity, regret of one's own doings." It can also be translated "comfort" or "console," although this is more commonly evidenced in the Pi'el stem. All these meanings infer an inner attitude in some way related to sorrow. It is thus that Dillmann comprehends it: "lasst Jahve sich...die er schon vorhatte, leid sein...."⁶⁷ In the 37 times that the words "repent" or "repented" occurs in the RSV, 29 times the word is נָחַם, the remaining 8 times שׁוּב ("to turn") is used. But נָחַם and שׁוּב are not synonymous despite their obvious relatedness. I believe Honeycutt correct when he states that "repentance in its fullest sense is an inward attitude to regret or sorrow (נָחַם) leading to an external change or 'turning' (שׁוּב)."⁶⁸ Fascinating, indeed, is their use in apposition in verse 12.

וַיִּשְׁבֹּב has also been variously translated and contributes to the problem of God's "change of mind." If God did not really intend to destroy the people of Israel,

⁶⁷A. Dillmann, op. cit., p. 338.

⁶⁸R. L. Honeycutt, "Exodus," The Broadman Bible Commentary, I (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1970), p. 452. Further, repentance seems to be a positive thing, that is to say a turning from a bad course of action to a good one. I Sam. 15:11 indicates YHWH's sorrow (נָחַם) in making Saul king because Saul had turned (שׁוּב) from following YHWH. Making Saul king had obviously been a bad course of action whereas Saul's "turning" had not been a good one. נָחַם appears, therefore, to involve a moral dimension not implicit in שׁוּב.

then he could not have properly repented of "the evil" cited in verse 14. This semantic argument must, however, remain inconclusive. Both the AV and RSV translate רָגַל "he thought (to do)," Childs understands it as "he considered (doing)." By contrast the NEB uses the idea of God threatening (to do). Ultimately, it seems, an a priori understanding of the nature of God is behind all these attempts to interpret God's repentance. Therein lies the crux of the problem facing hermeneutics in general and Exodus 32:14 in particular.

The present writer wants to affirm that the peschat of the narrative indicates that Moses did call for YHWH to desist from a proposed course of action and emphatically to change his mind from an evil bent to good intention. The writer of this account clearly perceived YHWH's destruction of his people as inherently evil. The promises made in the covenant to the patriarchs would not have been kept. A nation stemming from Moses as sole progenitor would not have been the Israel of God. For the covenant to remain operative, YHWH had to repent from his evil pursuit.

This, then must be our perception of the God of Exodus 32:7-14. It is one of a dynamic, personal being engaged in an existence between רָגַל and תָּעַר.⁶⁹

⁶⁹It is necessary to affirm that the terms רָגַל and תָּעַר need not always carry a moral sense and may indicate simply what is pleasant and what is unpleasant. However, as we have seen the context of Exod. 32:7-14 demands that the term תָּעַר carry a moral connotation in

Sometimes he is inclined to do evil and then repents. That is to say (a) he exhibits sorrow that he had thought to do אע"פ and (b) he changes his mind! Obviously this will involve him in genuine struggle between אע"פ and אע"פ. This is certainly the witness of Holy Writ. A God who acts out of necessity to do good has no relationship to the covenant God of history. The incarnation event substantiates this thesis. Christ's temptations in the wilderness and at Gethsemane are only of value when it is affirmed that latent within them was Christ's possibility of sinning. His struggle between good and evil was real enough.

The portrait of YHWH we have in this section of scripture is of One who is a free moral being, One who is able to do evil to his people but who, after a struggle decided to do good to them. This is a far-cry from Childs' arbitrary Zeus! YHWH is known as one who, despite struggle, has acted consistently. His nature is defined by that consistency and it is upon that consistency that his people can depend.

Verses 15-20

Verses 15-35 carry on the narrative from verses 1-14 in terms of the resultant effects of the apostasy per se (vv 1-6). In so doing they are part of a much

this instance and it is on this basis that the investigator's theory on the perception of God arising from Exodus 32:7-14 is offered.

larger context extending through chapter 34. The apostasy of the golden calf produces severe consequences. It evokes the displeasure of YHWH (vv 7-14) as well as that of Moses (vv 15-20). In his anger Moses destroys the calf (v 20) after breaking the tablets of the testimony (v 19). This latter symbolizes and indicates a severance of the relationship between YHWH and the people which is not renewed until chapter 34. Moses' demand for an explanation (vv 21-24) is followed by punishment of the people by the Levites (vv 25-29) and the subsequent plea for the reconciliation of the people with God (vv 30-34). The thirty-second chapter concludes with YHWH sending a plague to punish Israel.

Chapter 33 resumes the story with YHWH's continued refusal to presence himself with his people (vv 1-3). Israel mourns on account of it (vv 4-6). Still the avenue of diplomacy is not closed and communication continues to take place between YHWH and Moses, albeit away from the Israelite community. The tent of meeting is erected outside the camp (vv 7-11). Moses' third attempt at petitioning YHWH meets with success (vv 12-16) and the guarantee of God's presence is further verified by a manifestation of YHWH's glory. Chapter 34 concerns itself with the renewal of the covenant which is the logical outflow and an integral aspect of the reconciliation affected by Moses' intercessions. The intercessions themselves form three separate stages in the

process of atonement. In the first instance (32:11-14) Moses succeeds in staying the hand of YHWH who is bent on annihilating the nation. On the next occasion (32:30-34) a compromise is reached. YHWH reaffirms his original intent to grant Israel the land he had formerly promised them. However he reiterates the need that the people be punished, postponing it to an unspecified time (v 34b) and underscores his displeasure arising from the apostasy by directing a representative to guide them (v 34a) and withdrawing his own presence. It is only in the third intercession (33:12-16) that the final obstacle is removed and the foundation for reconciliation laid.

For the moment we are concerned with the material which follows the first intercession of Moses up to and including the next negotiation with YHWH. Moses descends from the mountain carrying the tablets of the testimony given to him by God. He is joined by Joshua to whom allusion was made in chapter 24:13. Joshua hears the noise of the camp and supposes it to be the tumult of battle. In a brief poetic fragment Moses corrects that impression. In encountering the worship of the golden calf Moses becomes angry and smashes the tablets and sets about destroying the symbol of the apostasy, subjecting the people to the consequences of their sin. לֶחַת הָעֵדוּת : As Moses descends from the mountain he carries the two tables of the testimony--a description of which is given in verse 15. The expression לֶחַת הָעֵדוּת is usually

attributed to the Priestly writer or a P glossator and distinguished from JE's expression לְפָנַי (31:18b) or more simply לְפָנַי (32:16).

Although these לְפָנַי could be made of wood (38:7) or metal (I Kings 7:36), they are most likely to be composed of stone because that is more usually the case when the word occurs with the verb כָּתַב as here and 31:18a, 34:29 etc. Hence לְפָנַי הָעֵדוּת can be taken as being synonymous with לְפָנַי אֲבָרָה (24:12; 32:16, 19; 34:1, 4, 28; Deut. 4:13; 5:19; 9:9ff., 17; 10:1-5 etc.) since, in all probability, this represented their composition. This is further attested by Dillmann:

Die Aufstellung von dauerhaften Gesetztafeln war alter legislatorischen Gebrauch. Man nahm dazu verschiedenes Material....auf hölzerne Tafeln....Man zog aber das Erz vor....Ebenso kommen aber auch steinerne Tafeln vor....⁷⁰

Kaufmann substantially agrees with the probability of the tablets being made of stone, emphasizing that they were to become the permanent symbol of Israelite religion.⁷¹

It is, perhaps, of some significance that the LXX's translation of this verse includes both expressions

"πλάκες τοῦ μαρτυρίου...., πλάκες λίθιναι ..."

The word לְפָנַי can refer to the law in general (Ps. 19:8; 119:88; 122:4) but it has also the more

⁷⁰A. Dillmann, Die Bücher Exodus und Leviticus (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1880), pp. 335-6.

⁷¹Y. Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile, trans. by M. Greenberg (London: Geo. Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1961), p. 235.

specific allusion, as here, to the Ten Words on the tablets expressing the divine will (31:18; 34:29; 40:20). It is the association of this latter definition of the testimony with the ark (40:20) that results in the title given to the ark of אָרוֹן הָעֵדוּת (40:21; Nu. 4:5; 7:89; Jos. 4:16).

The tablets are described as כְּתָבִים חֲשֵׁנִי עֲבֻרֵיהֶם. This is the only occasion in scripture where this detail is recorded. Evidently the primary purpose of the information is to suggest that the stone documents were of a size suitable for carrying. It may also be, as Noth⁷² and Clements⁷³ suggest, that the statement signifies that these particular tablets were something out of the ordinary. This thesis carries more weight when taken with the following verse in which the uniqueness of these stones is further emphasized. The major difficulty, however, of reading this idea into the verse is not to sufficiently take note of the fact that writing on both sides was not at all uncommon in Mesopotamian and Ugaritic tablets.⁷⁴

The emphasis upon the tablets is of importance as is demonstrated in verse 16. They are stated to be

⁷²M. Noth, Exodus: A Commentary, trans. by J. S. Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 249.

⁷³R. E. Clements, Exodus (Cambridge: University Press, 1972), p. 207.

⁷⁴U. Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Exodus, trans. by I. Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), p. 418.

דעשה אלהים and דכתב אלהים. Despite Noth's attempt to understand these terms as not necessarily implying the overt act of God in making these tablets,⁷⁵ one is compelled to think otherwise. A comparison with the expressions אתנה לך את-לחת אשר כתבתי in chapter 24 verse 12 and more specifically כתבים באצבע אלהים (31:18b) tends to underscore the idea that God was actively operative in producing this testimony. So much so that the anthropomorphic description of YHWH using his finger may not be altogether inappropriate. That the author is concerned to attribute the phenomenon of producing the tablets to God is further enhanced by the contrast placed upon the production of the renewed covenant after Moses had smashed the originals at the foot of the mountain. In chapter 34:28 Moses is himself responsible for writing the words of the law.

This emphasis upon the stone tablets is appropriate on two related levels. One can discern that the author's intent was to ascribe divine origin to these particularly holy things which were destined to become the symbol of Israel's faith. Secondly, in so doing, he was surely concerned to highlight the authority of this revelation which had been mediated through Moses. By focussing upon such intentions one avoids the rather

⁷⁵Noth, op. cit., p. 249.

trite consideration of the nature of the writing and the more naïve suggestion of Park that "they were written in the language of heaven."⁷⁶

On the journey down the mountain Moses is joined by Joshua (v. 17). The suspense of the story mounts in the ensuing colloquy. Both Noth⁷⁷ and Childs⁷⁸ see the significance of the juxtaposition of the two characters in terms of the greater prominence given to Moses. It further enhances the tradition of Israel's religious founder. Joshua misunderstands the noise he hears from the camp and only the astuteness and experience--or possibly the prior knowledge--of Moses are able to correctly discern the meaning of the sounds.

Joshua mistakes קול העם ברעה for קול חלחלה. His experience of battle against the Amalekites (17:8-13) may have influenced his impression. The word ברעה (lit. "in its noise") which Joshua understood as the sound of battle does carry that connotation in the hiphil stem of רע when it can refer to a war-cry or battle alarm (Jos. 6:10ff.; Jud. 7:21; I Sam. 17:52; etc.). More specifically, along with the hithp'lel stem, it can be a triumphant cry over one's

⁷⁶J. E. Park, "Exodus: Exposition," The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. II (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952), p. 1067.

⁷⁷Noth, op. cit., p. 249.

⁷⁸B. S. Childs, Exodus: A Commentary (London: SCM Press, 1974), p. 568.

enemies (Jer. 50:15; Ps. 41:72; 60:10). Since we know already from verse 6 that the context is one of revelry, it is most appropriately translated "as they shouted."⁷⁹ The final א is more enigmatic. Dillmann suggests that it is an intentional feminine use for the masses.⁸⁰ The suggestion of Cassuto, however, has more to commend it. He argues that this archaic spelling was retained by the Masoretes to make it identical with the consonants of אעב in verse 12 ("with evil") to emphasize the paronomasia intended by the text.⁸¹ Since verses were composed with a high degree of literary skill such a word-play with verse 12 is not beyond the realm of possibility.

Moses' response to Joshua (v 18) is of "a highly peculiar, almost poetical character."⁸² Poetic metre is generally recognized here as consisting of three cola, though there is much disagreement over the length of the last colon. The nature of the verse seems to be that of repetitive parallelism the vogue of which, according to Andersen, was considerably before the era of the monarchy:

⁷⁹Cf. LXX's rendering κραζόντων.

⁸⁰Dillmann, op. cit., p. 339.

⁸¹Cassuto, loc. cit.

⁸²Dillmann, cited by S. R. Driver, The Book of Exodus (Cambridge: University Press, 1918).

The first two cola exhibit it (i.e. repetitive parallelism) so perfectly (with the further feature of rhyme between the two words which do not involve repetition) that its authenticity as a very ancient piece need not be in doubt.⁸³

The translation of the first two cola is usually taken to be:

There is no sound of the answering of strength (or might) and there is no sound of the answering of defeat (or weakness).⁸⁴

Such a translation understands the verb אָנָן to mean "to answer." The wisdom of choosing this particular nuance of meaning may be called into question in view of the obscurity one derives from the expressions "the answering of strength" and "the answering of defeat." Conceivably it may be argued with Dillmann, for example, that אָנָן conveys the idea of Wechselgesänge.⁸⁵ Keil and Delitzsch⁸⁶ along with Cassuto⁸⁷ also opt for an antiphonal understanding of the verse. This viewpoint may have its antecedents in the battle with the Amalekites (17:8-13) where the struggle is conceived of as an

⁸³F. I. Andersen, "A Lexicographical Note on Exodus XXXII 18," Vetus Testamentum, XVI (1966), 108.

⁸⁴Examples are numerous and include Andersen, *ibid.*, p. 109, Cassuto, *loc. cit.*, Driver, *loc. cit.*

⁸⁵Dillmann, Die Bücher Exodus und Leviticus, *op. cit.*, pp. 335-6.

⁸⁶C. F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch, II, trans. by J. Martin (Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans Publ. Co., n.d.), p. 225.

⁸⁷Cassuto, *loc. cit.*

alternation of fortunes between the two opposing forces, each army prevailing as Moses either raised or lowered his hand! The result would have been an interaction between the alternating sounds of victory and defeat. Possibly, too, the same antiphonal effect may be discerned without allusion to the precarious nature of the Amalekite war, and that the alternation is in one's hearing--first from one side, then from the other. This latter conception would be Dillmann's:

...kein Laut (der:Äusserung von Ueberlegenheit d.i.) von Stimmen Siegender und kein Laut (des Gegenrufes von Niederlage d.i.) von Stimmen Geschlagener! Laut von (Singen) Gesangstimmen vernehme ich, d.i. das sind nicht Laute, wie sie im Gewoge der Schlacht bald von den Obsiegenden, bald von den Unterliegenden erschallen, sondern Wechselgesänge.⁸⁸

The problem of this position lies primarily in the understanding of the third colon לְקוֹל תְּשׁוּבָה. This is variously translated as "the sound of antiphonal songs" (Keil & Delitzsch)⁸⁹ and "the sound of answering-in song" (Cassuto).⁹⁰ Both translations are somewhat forced. The crux of the problem revolves around the distinction, if there is one, between תְּשׁוּבָה in the first two cola and לְקוֹל תְּשׁוּבָה in the third. The proponents of Wechselgesänge translate the qal infinitive construct "answering" and the pi'el infinitive absolute "answering-in-song" or "antiphonal songs." Dillmann moves from

⁸⁸Dillmann, loc. cit.

⁸⁹Keil & Delitzsch, loc. cit.

⁹⁰Cassuto, loc. cit.

"Stimmen" to "Gesangstimmen." The slight difference between the gal and the pi'el does not appear to warrant such modifications in translation. To demonstrate properly the validity of such an understanding of the final colon one ought to postulate haplography. There is a distinct possibility that a word did drop out, but it must be insisted upon if one wants to think in terms of antiphonal singing. Of course to suggest haplography is to confuse the metre of the verse, although it must be admitted that the metre is something of an enigma already. KBH³ incorporates גַּל גַּל in the final colon but its placement there is not a convincing move since it interrupts the steady parallelism established by the foregoing material. We shall consider this dilemma again.

The LXX does not appear to be of great help:

οὐκ ἔστιν φωνὴ ἐξαρχόντων κατ' ἰσχὺν
οὐδὲ φωνὴ ἐξαρχόντων τροπῆς

In this translation גַּל גַּל is represented by

ἐξαρχόντων which does not further our understanding of the meaning of the term גַּל גַּל. Targum Onkelos effectively ignores the problem in its departure from any strict adherence to the text:

לא קל ג' ברין דנצחין בקרבא
ואף לא קל אלשין דכתבין

(lit. "Not the sound of heroes who are victorious in battle & also not the sound of weaklings who are broken.")

One thing is certain, that in his poetic comment Moses is responding to Joshua's observation by denying that the sound he heard is; in fact, the noise of battle rage. There is no sound here either of victory or defeat which one might associate with war. If this is the essential meaning of the first two cola--and few, if any, would deny it--then there is every reason to believe that עָנַן simply carries the nuance of meaning to cry, sing or utter something without necessarily referring to responsive-type singing or answering. Such a nuance is well attested in scripture. In Jer. 51:14 the expression וְעָנַן עָלֶיךָ ה' יָדָד may be best understood as "and they shall utter a shout of joy (victory) over you." Num. 21:16ff. relates the story of the well at Beer at which the Israelites sing עָלֵי בְּאֵר עָנַן-לָהּ (lit. Spring up, O well! Sing to it!). Also in the context of a song, the women greeted King Saul in I Sam. 18:7. It is most likely that וַתַּעֲנִינָה וַתִּשְׁבְּחֵי should be rendered simply "and the women sang" since the song follows immediately, and the whole context is one of singing and dancing (vv 7b & 6 respectively). Similarly in I Sam. 21:12; 29:5; and when Miriam celebrates the deliverance at the Sea (Exod. 15:21), she sings to the people. Although Miriam's song could be a liturgical hymn, albeit of a most ancient

order,⁹¹ there is little evidence to suggest it represented a responsive litany. Indeed the context would indicate otherwise for it appears to be either a personal hymn of thanksgiving or, at most, a liturgical/priestly entreaty to worship.

Examples in the Psalms present the same type of difficulty in understanding the word ןןל. Nevertheless Psalms 119:172 and 147:7 can be comprehended as singing apart from responsive or antiphonal usage. There are other examples where ןןל does not necessarily imply responsive singing, but an adequate case could be made for such an interpretation and therefore they are not helpful in the present discussion. It will be noted that the Wechselgesänge interpretation might be argued for some of the above examples, but it is hoped that enough has been said and sufficiently demonstrated to suggest that ןןל in verse 18 can properly be translated (in terms of the nuance of meaning) to sing or utter. This would enable us to translate the first two cola:

There is no sound of the singing of strength,
And there is no sound of the singing of defeat.

That is, Moses neither hears the singing of victory nor a lament of defeat.

⁹¹This is recognized by numerous scholars, e.g. Noth, op. cit., p. 121; J. P. Hyatt, Exodus (London: Oliphants, 1971), p. 169; F. M. Cross, "The Song of the Sea and Canaanite Myth," Journal for Theology & the Church, V (1968), p. 11.

What then does he hear? The third colon of the verse is crucial to the interpretation of the whole poetic structure. It is determinative for a proper treatment of עֲנֹת.

Moses comments that he hears קוֹל עֲנֹת. Probably the most significant observation here is the word-play between the gal infinitive construct עֲנֹת in the first two cola and the pi'el infinitive absolute עֲנֹת. What is the significance of a switch from gal to pi'el? The answer to this question will give a clue to the meaning of the phrase קוֹל עֲנֹת. The variant readings on this colon illustrate the doubt regarding its meaning. The possibility of haplography has already been discussed. It would give rise to the translation of antiphonal songs (answering-in-song). In place of עֲנֹת the Symmachus' Greek translation supposes עֲנֹת meaning, according to Dillmann,⁹² "humiliation." The Samaritan Pentateuch, Syriac version and some mediaeval Hebrew manuscripts read עֲנֹת.⁹³ Both these variants make sense in the context. "The sound of humiliation" or "the sound of sins" could be readily conceived of as part of the narrative, although both seem a little amorphous in nature such that it would be a trifle difficult to discern what precisely was going on in the

⁹²Dillmann, op. cit., p. 340.

⁹³R. Kittel (ed.), Biblia Hebraica (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1937), p. 129. Also cited as KBH³.

camp. This is particularly true of עֲנֹת where the contrast between the noise of battle in the first two cola and the קוֹל עֲנֹת of the third is hardly a significant one. Would it not be confusing to differentiate between קוֹל עֲנֹת חֲלוּשָׁה and קוֹל עֲנֹת, for whatever else defeat may be it is certainly humiliating!

The most convincing argument against these variant readings must surely be the poetic matrix of the verse. The repetitive parallelism is such as to suggest that קוֹל עֲנֹת forms the basic element of structure, appearing to inaugurate each colon. Not only must the consonantal appearance of these words remain intact but it seems reasonable to suppose that the paronomasia between the gal infinitive of the first two cola and the pi'el infinitive of the last colon ought also to convey a basic similarity of meaning. However, this is not the case in either variant. עֲנֹת destroys the repetitive parallelism both in appearance and meaning whereas עֲנֹת alters the meaning so that the sense of the final colon does not relate to the rest of the verse.

The LXX attempts to circumvent the problem by translating it ἀλλὰ φωνὴν ἐξαρχόντων οἴκου. This would suggest the word עֲנֹת was dropped out of the MT. The evidence for making such a conclusion is sparse, if it exists at all, indicating that the LXX is probably a secondary interpretation. Yet the LXX text is helpful

in two ways. In the first instance it retains the word ἐξαρχόντων which suggests that no difference in meaning is seen between עַנְנֹת and עַנְנֹתַי.

Secondly the allusion to revelry is a useful one. (Verse 6 has indicated that the noise Moses heard was indeed of this type. Targum Onkelos corroborates this idea:

קל דנדא כ'י ("the sound of those who make sport").

A novel explanation of the meaning of the third colon has been proposed by Edelman.⁹⁴ He suggests that Moses was much too emotionally wrought in the circumstances described in chapter 32 to be able to compose the grammatical subtleties which are involved in paronomasia or repetitive parallelism. Instead, he proposes a reading of עַנְנֹת (sic) in place of עַנְנֹתַי. By insisting upon the prosaic nature of the verse, Edelman stems off any objections based either upon poetic structure or semantics. The dāgeš represents no problem for him--the masoretes put it in later. The intrusive waw is a little more enigmatic, but Whybray in a subsequent article⁹⁵ rises to the challenge by suggesting that the spelling of עַנְנֹת is a dialectical variant of the pronunciation of the goddess' name which he observes in Joshua 15:59 as well as in an Aramaic

⁹⁴R. Edelman, "Short Notes to עַנְנֹת Exodus XXXII 18," Vetus Testamentum, XVI (1966), 355.

⁹⁵R. N. Whybray, "עַנְנֹת in Exodus XXXII 18," Vetus Testamentum, XVII (1967), 122. The LXX of Josh. 15:59 attests the place name being בֵּית עַנְנֹת and not

inscription from Egypt among a few other things. But consider the argument a little more carefully. What would have prompted Moses in his "emotional outcry" to think of 'Anat? The only reason would seem to be prior knowledge of the golden calf, and even if this be granted why should 'Anat be identified with a young bull? 'Anat is ordinarily not depicted in such symbolism, and even less in the form of a young male bull! And why choose 'Anat over Ba'al who would, if anything, seem a more natural choice. It will also be seen from verse 20, in the destruction of the calf, that Moses assumes a role akin to 'Anat against Mot which would preclude his association of the golden calf with 'Anat. The only other conceivable reason for אֱלֹהִים referring to 'Anat would be for Edelman to admit a play on the word אֱלֹהִים in the first two cola. Such an admission, of course, would remove the presupposition of not allowing grammatical subtleties on which his hypothesis rests.

In an attempt to solve the enigmatic problem of metre, Andersen constructs an attractive option. Since the verse exhibits repetitive parallelism, he insists that a word has dropped out of the passage which, in the light of the Targumic understanding of the verse, is most likely to contain the root אֱלֹהִים. The occurrence

אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים (MT), and the LXX may be more original in this case. Cf. A. G. Auld, "A Judean Sanctuary of 'Anat (Josh. 15:59)?" Tel Aviv, IV (1977), 85-86. If this is so, and I believe that it is, then Whybray is deprived of a viable comparison between the אֱלֹהִים (MT) of Josh 15:59 and that of Exod. 32:18 at the outset.

of קִּיָּס in verse 6 substantiates his solution. Because of the nature of the rhyme he reconstructs the colon as follows:

קִּיָּס עֲנֹת קִּיָּס

Though קִּיָּס does not occur elsewhere in the MT of the Old Testament, Andersen justifies its use by noting that קִּיָּס is also a hapax legomenon. קִּיָּס could then be taken as describing sexual orgies. Also, along with his belief that עֲנֹת is a technical cult term of Ugarit, Andersen argues that Moses is describing the worship of the golden calf in terms used in the service of Ba'al. This finds agreement from Rylaarsdam who comments: "The picture is that of the orgiastic type of worship associated with fertility cults."⁹⁶ There is much to commend Andersen's well thought-through article, and perhaps his is the best attempt at dealing with the problem of metre. Nevertheless, although he had also endeavoured to explain the function of the pi'el form of קִּיָּס, one is left wondering if his thesis of a technical cult term is much more than a superficial reaction to the exchange between the gal and the pi'el.

From much of our discussion thus far, and with the rendering of verse 18 by Targum Onkelos, the variant readings and the translation of the LXX, it seems fairly certain that what Moses heard was the noise of revelry.

⁹⁶J. C. Rylaarsdam, "Exodus: Introduction and Esegesis," The Interpreter's Bible (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952), p. 1067.

This is further substantiated by the general context of the chapter and specifically corroborated in verse 19. This being the case it is the contention of the present investigator that תַּלְלַע in the final colon is an intensified form of תַּלְלַע in the first two lines. This is substantially the viewpoint of McNeile⁹⁷ and Childs.⁹⁸ Such intensification is extremely appropriate to the gist of Moses' comment although it involves him in a certain degree of poetic license. But this is not unseemly by virtue of the narrative circumstances surrounding the incident which Edelman has given notice of. The resultant translation would be something of the nature:

There is no sound of the singing of strength,
And there is no sound of the singing of defeat,
It is a sound of singing!

That is, it is not the noises associated with battle--either of jubilant singing or lament--but simply singing per se!

Verse 19, as already noted, presents a clue for the interpretation of its preceeding verse נָרַן אֶת-הַלֵּל וְהַדָּמָה. Dancing was often associated with religious ceremony. Miriam (15:20) led the women in dancing and song ascribing praise to YHWH who had delivered them at the Sea. David danced before the sacred ark (II Sam. 6:14). It could also be an expression of

⁹⁷A. H. McNeile, The Book of Exodus (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1931), p.

⁹⁸Childs, op. cit., p. 557.

joy after a victory in battle (Judg. 11:34; I Sam. 18:16; 21:12; 29:5). Taken from the root לִיט the manner of the dance may imply ecstatic whirling and, as discussed earlier, may well indicate an orgiastic facet to the idolatrous celebration. It is not certain what פָּרַע in verse 25 means but it does seem to suggest immoral behaviour which, according to the apostle Paul, is the inevitable result of idolatry.⁹⁹ Yet חִלּוּל need not imply more than dances per se since dancing itself was a recognized part of authentic worship. The horror that struck Moses was the context of the dancing where the dances were expressions of idolatrous worship.

Moses' reaction to the scene before him is an interesting one. First of all he felt very angry. The phrase אֵרָא is comparable with that used by Moses in his interrogation of YHWH (v 11) לֹא אֵרָא אֵלֹהִים and Aaron's entreaty to Moses (v 22) אֵלֹהִים אֵרָא. The first comparison is particularly instructive for there is an obvious relationship between the אֵרָא he could not understand and the אֵרָא he experienced himself, especially as the cause of each was similar. Johnson has commented that "the actual sight of the blatant transgression affected Moses more strongly than the report of it could do."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹Romans 1:23ff.

¹⁰⁰p. C. Johnson, "Exodus," The Wycliffe Bible Commentary (London: Oliphants, 1963), p. 83.

The breaking of the tablets is agreed by most not to have been the outcome of Moses' anger, but a deliberate symbolic gesture indicating the annulment of the covenant. Dillmann puts it quite forceably:

Im Augenblicke des Unwillens erachtet er seine Bemühungen für die Jahverreligion bei Israel als vergeblich und die Tafeln mit dem Grundgesetz dieser Religion als unnütz.¹⁰¹

The principal effect of וַיִּשַׁלַּךְ מִיָּדוֹ אֶת-הַלְחָת
וַיִּשְׁבֹּר אֹתָם was to dramatize the broken relationship between God and his people on account of their apostasy and disregard for the law revealed to them previously (21:1ff.). It was not, as the Talmud suggests, that the people were ignorant of the law against idolatry and Moses then broke the tablets to remove any proof that such a law ever existed! No, on the contrary, "Israel has come as near as it can to self-destruction at its very birthplace."¹⁰² Only God's grace in forgiving his people made renewal of the covenant possible, allowing Israel to again become the recipient of the promises made to the patriarchs.

Moses' third reaction to his encounter with the apostasy was to destroy the golden calf (v 20). This destruction is a much debated phenomenon and has become the 'proof-text' for numerous scholars who believe the image had a wooden core. The exegetical difficulties of verse 4

¹⁰¹Dillmann, loc. cit.

¹⁰²Clements, op. cit., p. 208.

concerning the construction of the golden calf have already been considered. Their explanation or solution has often been tackled by recourse to this verse relating the destruction of the image. It is the conclusion of this investigation that whatever else can be discerned in verse 4 about the structure and composition of the golden calf this verse has no material contribution to make regarding the substantiation of any view of construction.¹⁰³

¹⁰³See previous discussion in Chapter III. In the Ugaritic epic of the struggle between Ba'al and Mot, Loewenstamm ("The Making & Destruction of the Golden Calf," *Biblica*, XXXXVIII no. 4 [1967], 481-491, also "The Ugaritic Fertility Myth--The Result of a Mistranslation," *Israel Exploration Journal*, XII [1961], 87f.) has pointed out a marked similarity between the death of Mot and the destruction of the golden calf. The text reads as follows:

tiḥd bn ilm mt	She seized Mot, son of El
bḥrb tbq'nn	Cleaved him with a sword
bḥtr tḏrynn	Winnowed him with a sieve
bišt tšrpnn	Burnt him with fire
brḥm tṭḥnn	Ground him with millstones
bšd tḏr'nn	Scattered him in a field
širh ltikl 'šrm	His flesh the birds ate...the fowl
mnth ltkly npr	made an end.

The similarity with Exodus 32:20 is evident in the use of the three Ugaritic verbs šrp (to burn), ṭḥn (to grind) and ḏr' (to scatter). The account of the destruction of the calf employs two identical and one corresponding Hebrew verb, interestingly in the same order: šrp, ṭḥn and zr'. These verbs occur again in the Ras Shamra tablets when Mot voices his own grievances to 'Anat:

'lk pht srp bist	Because of you, I have suffered burning
'lk (pht ṭ)ḥn brḥm	Because of you, I have suffered grinding by millstones
- - - - -	
- - - - -	
- - - - -	
'lk pht ḏr' bym	Because of you, I have suffered scattering in the sea.

It may be that verse 20 is directly borrowed from Ugarit or possibly both had access to a method of expressing total destruction which was fairly common

Many believe that Moses' demand that the people drink the residue of the destroyed calf is directly related to the trial by ordeal in Num. 5:24. The idea was to test who among the people had sinned, for the 'water of cursing' would produce effects on the guilty which would demonstrate their guilt. But since all the people had, inadvertently or not, participated in the apostasy to their shame, it would seem a little redundant to demonstrate to all that they were under the judgment of God (32:31, 34, 35; 33:3, 4). It is significant that in verses 7-14 YHWH was ready to destroy the whole nation apart from Moses. This being so, it is difficult to see too great a resemblance between the people drinking the water containing the dust of the golden calf and the woman suspected of adultery being forced to drink the 'water of cursing.' Rather, in their apostasy the people had misused their possessions, now they had to abrogate such misuse. There would come a time, in the construction of the tabernacle, when they would again have the opportunity to utilize the gifts God had given them in such a manner that would bring honour to him in place of dishonour.

It is noteworthy that the Deuteronomic account of the destruction of the golden calf omits any reference to

throughout the ancient Near East in the middle of the second millenium B.C. See also J.C.L. Gibson, Canaanite Myths and Legends (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark Ltd., 2nd ed., 1978), p. 77.

the people drinking the solution. Instead Moses says, "וַאֲשַׁלַּךְ אֶת-עֶפְרוֹ אֶל-הַנָּחַל הַיָּרֵד עֵין-הַחֶרֶב" (Deut. 9:21). Now נַחַל indicates a torrent, that is, rushing water in a valley stream or wadi.¹⁰⁴ The problem then becomes apparent--the dust would be carried away quickly making it difficult to have the solution drunk. This is not incompatible with the Exodus account, for when Moses scatters the dust עַל-פְּנֵי הַדָּיִם one may suppose that the only body of water available would have been נַחַל. This is not to deny the possibility, or indeed the probability, of the people drinking the water but is simply an attempt to understand the purpose and relevance of such an action being included in the narrative. It is the conviction of the present investigator that whether the people drank the solution or the dust was carried off in the torrent or there was a combination of both phenomena, the writer is merely implying that the golden calf, the symbol of Israel's apostasy, was removed without trace.

This point is made by Beyerlin who suggests that each account of the calf's destruction reflects certain cultic-ritual forms:

This cultic procedure was certainly not that of the ordeal, for the question of guilt is not in doubt....It is not sufficient to destroy the

¹⁰⁴F. Brown, S. R. Driver & C. A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), p. 636.

casting-mould. The power residing in it must also be got rid of....Because the gold of the calf image could not be obliterated by fire the dust which remained was mixed with water and given to the Israelites to drink. In this way, it was intended, the idol would be "disposed of" without remainder and got rid of entirely. The Deuteronomist, on the other hand, makes the remainder of the broken image be washed away by a brook...corresponding to the rite of purification in Deut. xxi. 6.¹⁰⁵

The idea of cultic-ritual is a little far-fetched since burning and washing were alone sufficient in the rite of purification and does not adequately explain the additional disposal of the residue. Besides, in view of the comparison made between Exod. 32:20; Deut. 9:21 and the Ugaritic tablets one is convinced that the biblical descriptions of the destruction of the image is reflecting an archaic expression of total annihilation. It achieves the purposes of the writers who want to emphasize the fact that Moses did destroy the golden calf.

Verses 21-24

With the destruction of the golden calf finally complete and, as yet, no punishment invoked, Moses determines to discover the cause of the apostasy. He summons Aaron to task before meting out his own retribution. This paragraph containing Aaron's explanation of what took place (vv 21-24) is an interesting one although scholars differ in their understanding of it. Basically

¹⁰⁵W. Beyerlin, Origins and History of the Oldest Sinaitic Traditions (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), p. 131.

there is some doubt over the purpose of Aaron's excuse in the context. Is it really attempting to excuse the father of Israel's priesthood or is it making him appear as an even more pathetic figure inculpated in the shame of the nation? In other words, is Aaron the corrupter or the corrupted? An answer to this question will signify the intent of the inspired writer.

The text itself is fairly straightforward and facilitates translation and observation of what Aaron did confess. In demanding an explanation Moses uses a typical idiom of disputation:¹⁰⁶ כֹּה-עָשָׂה לְךָ הָעָם
הַזֶּה כִּי-הִבֵּאתָ עָלָיו חַטָּאת גְּדֹלָה. The comparison

with Abimelech's question to Abraham (Gen. 20:9):

כֹּה-עָשִׂיתָ לָנוּ כִּי-הִבֵּאתָ עָלַי וְעַל-חַמְלָכְתִּי
חַטָּאת גְּדֹלָה is noteworthy. The similarity is

striking and may even suggest a single source. Other examples which capture this use of עָשָׂה, that is action in a bad sense, include Gen. 27:45 and Exod. 14:11.

חַטָּאת גְּדֹלָה is obviously a reference to the apostasy per se. The root of חָטָא is metaphorical containing within it the idea of movement, explicitly of missing a mark or a way (e.g. Judg. 20:16; Prov. 19:2; 8:36).

In its transferred sense it signifies all kinds of failure which occur in the relationships

¹⁰⁶B. S. Childs, Exodus (London: SCM Press, 1974), p. 569.

of men with one another (e.g. Gen. 4:22; Jg. 11:27; I Sam. 24:12; II Kgs. 18:14). But the root is used first and foremost for all human failures over against God.¹⁰⁷

If the idea involved in נָטַח is one of erroneous action rather than a definite willful act--although one cannot be too certain that this is the case in view of the extensive use in the Old Testament--then its reference may be significant for the nature of the apostasy. Might the word suggest not so much a deliberate act of disobedience but a misguided failure in perception? That is to say Israel's need for tangibility in their worship evidenced in their construction of a golden image was not inherently evil. Indeed, provisions for their needs were in the process of being met with Moses on the mountain-top! Their "missing the mark" was rather the manner in which they took matters into their own hands and failed to trust God to meet their needs. This specific use of the word נָטַח might allow for such an understanding, but the evidence is far from being conclusive.

Aaron begins his excuse by an appeal that Moses subdue himself: אֶל-יָדָיו אֶפְתָּה. The expression is similar in nature to שׁוּב דַּעְרוֹן אֶפְתָּה (v 12) as well as those in verses 11 and 19. Moses is himself placed in a position not unlike that which he had put YHWH into (vv 11ff.). He too, needs to be appeased and

¹⁰⁷G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology, I, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), p. 263.

and this may account for the designation וַיִּתֵּן paid him by Aaron. Commentators are divided in their assessment of Aaron's excuse. The attempt is made either to defend it or to view it as deliberate sarcasm on the part of the writer.

Apart from the peculiarly Jewish attempts both ancient and modern to exculpate Aaron, most commentators are agreed in a more obvious interpretation of these verses. They describe Aaron's excuse in terms of "naivete,"¹⁰⁸ "grim humor,"¹⁰⁹ "a mocking satire,"¹¹⁰ and as "lame and hollow-sounding,"¹¹¹ and "contemptible."¹¹² On closely examining Aaron's defense of his action in the apostasy it becomes evident that he claims to have been a passive agent in Israel's sin, a type of catalyst which prompted a phenomenon of which he was entirely innocent! He claims passivity on two grounds. First of all he blames the people (vv 22, 23), then he appears to blame the calf (v 24)! His condemnation of

¹⁰⁸Gressmann and Bantsch, cited in Childs, op. cit., p. 569.

¹⁰⁹A. Cole, Exodus (London: Tyndale Press, 1973), p. 219.

¹¹⁰C. A. Simpson, cited in J. P. Hyatt, Exodus (London: Oliphants, 1971), p. 309.

¹¹¹M. Noth, Exodus (London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 244; and J. C. Rylaarsdam, "Exodus," Interpreter's Bible (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1942).

¹¹²C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, The Pentateuch, II (Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans Publ. Co., reprint 1971), p. 226.

the people is also on two levels. It was their demand

עשה-לני אלהים that prompted his involvement initially. But much more basically he pleads

אתה ידעת את-העם כי ברע הוא. The termin-

ology ברע הוא seems somewhat awkward. The LXX

understands this "evil intent" as τὸ ὄργημα (lit. the "onrush" or "assault,"¹¹³ probably better translated

here as insurgence, rage, violence or the like). This

understanding of the text may well be indicative of the threat to which Aaron felt himself exposed and may be an

attempt on the part of the LXX if not to justify Aaron's behaviour certainly to make it comprehensible. His in-

volvement would be seen as being motivated by fear of the mob which had confronted him. Apart from this there ap-

pears scant justification for a textual variant which

presumably omits both the accusative particle את

and the conjunction כי, modifies אין to אין and

the crucial ברע to עברת and changes the word

order. The present investigator prefers the more dif-

ficult reading of the MT. The Samaritan Pentateuch

reads פרע for ברע, and may represent a caco-

graphic error. The possibility of cacography is the

more likely when it is recognized that פרע recurs

twice in verse 25. That פרע could be mistaken for

ברע is evident, the more so since the context would

¹¹³H. G. Liddell & R. Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 9th ed., 1940), p. 1253.

allow its inclusion to be an eminently reasonable one.

However, the decisive factor ascertaining the original word must be the recurrence of פָּרַע in verse 25.¹¹⁴

Although the phrase בָּרַע אֶת is grammatically difficult, yet the sense of the expression is not incomprehensible.¹¹⁵ Aaron is convincing Moses of an evil set or predisposition on the part of the people. That is to say the nation was inclined to evil a priori, they were bent on mischief or wickedness and infected with it. It was part of the very structure of their fallen nature. They could do no other.

Having set the stage in his favour, Aaron proceeds to give an account of what exactly took place as the people demanded אֲשֶׁר יִלְכּוּ לִפְנֵינָּךְ אֱלֹהִים. His account in verse 23 is a verbatim quote of verse 1b. He describes it exactly as it happened. The people were insecure without Moses whom they feared dead or lost and demanded some tangible expression of guidance and

¹¹⁴It is not difficult to discern how the Samaritan scribe may have been influenced to write פָּרַע in view of the proximity of appearance of this word, and the attention drawn to it in view of its uncertain meaning. Certainly it would be considerably more difficult to understand the derivation of בָּרַע from פָּרַע apart from simple cacography which seems most unlikely. Dillmann's a priori dismissal of the Samaritan Pentateuch on the basis of the fact that vv. 21-24 were written by a different author from the writer of vv. 25-29 has little to commend it. A. Dillmann, Exodus und Leviticus (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1880), p. 341.

¹¹⁵Cf. Exod. 5:19 where the term בָּרַע appears to refer to the nature of the predicament in which the Israelites found themselves.

protection for the future. This verbatim account is the more significant when observed in the light of the succeeding verse. For here Aaron departs from a strict adherence to exactitude when it comes time to recount his own role in the apostasy! This can only be a deliberate modus operandi on the part of the writer or redactor and is indicative of his purpose in the passage.

When he comes then to his own role in gathering the gold, the account is considerably abbreviated and minimizes Aaron's own role. The people bring the gold of their own accord, as if it had not been requested by him. When he reaches the crucial point on the actual construction of the calf, Aaron's story diverges completely from the original account. He pictures himself uninvolved. The calf came out all by itself. Moreover, the fact that Aaron commences his defence with a broad condemnation of the people as evil by nature and ends up disavowing any responsibility for himself, hardly speaks well for Aaron.¹¹⁶

The purpose of not picturing Aaron in a favourable light is entirely in accord with an understanding of this unit (vv 21-24) and remains consistent with the context of the rest of the chapter. This fundamental observation that the author is not attempting to excuse or justify Aaron is of considerable significance for determining the authorship of the paragraph. It is proposed by several scholars including Hyatt¹¹⁷ and Beyerlin¹¹⁸ that verses 21-24 represent an expression of priestly interests in attempting to exonerate Aaron. Clearly the

¹¹⁶Childs, op. cit., p. 570.

¹¹⁷Hyatt, loc. cit.

¹¹⁸W. Beyerlin, Origins and History of the Oldest Sinaitic Traditions (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), p. 132.

point of the story is the reverse! The intention of the writer is to illustrate the weakness of Israel's first High Priest and to allow Aaron's own words to condemn him.

No matter what one makes of Aaron's excuse in these verses one thing is certain, he is deliberately portrayed as a weak, impotent leader of the nation. As such, one can readily discern a basic continuity with the rest of the chapter. The contrast between the figures of Moses and Aaron as an intentional literary device has been recognized by both Lewy¹¹⁹ and Childs.¹²⁰ Moses is the charismatic leader, bold and confident as he faces both men and God. Aaron, on the other hand, cannot even inhibit the slightest provocation from the people. If the nation is stiff-necked then Aaron is assuredly spineless! The writer does not further concern himself with Aaron and that aspect of the story in which YHWH is so angry with Aaron that Moses has to intercede on his behalf (Deut. 9:20) is not found in the Exodus account. Perhaps the writer is not so much interested in Aaron per se, neither in his person nor in his position as the ancestor of Israel's priesthood, as he is in the contrast that he makes with Moses, who represents the paradigm of true leadership. In other words, it is difficult to

¹¹⁹I. Lewy, "The Story of the Golden Calf Re-analysed," Vetus Testamentum, IX (1959), 319.

¹²⁰Childs, loc. cit.

consider this paragraph as a polemic either by a priestly circle attempting to vindicate Aaron¹²¹ or by an anti-Aaronide group seeking to castigate the original High Priest. Instead, the focus is upon the role of Aaron in the apostasy vis-à-vis the part played before and after by Moses.

Verses 25-29

From the anaemic picture of Aaron's leadership, the narrative moves to consider Moses asserting his control over the fate of his people (vv 25-29). Observing that the people were וְגֵרִים he enlists the aid of the Levites and commences to effect retribution on the nation for the sin of the golden calf. Aaron is reduced to a mere observer of the massacre as the strong arm of justice sweeps through the camp. In this sense it could be supposed that the contrast noted in the previous paragraph (vv 21-24), and in other parts of the chapter, is continued. However, the consensus of opinion on this unit (vv 25-29) supposes it to be a later addition to the narrative reflecting a strong anti-Aaron polemic.¹²² Specifically, it is believed that the story of the Levites is of an aetiological nature and not originally part of the golden calf tradition.¹²³ Possibly at a time when

¹²¹Beyerlin, loc. cit.

¹²²Noth, op. cit., p. 250; Childs, loc. cit.

¹²³G. W. Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness: The Murmuring Motif in the Wilderness Traditions in the Old

the right of the Levites to be priests was being questioned, this story of the inauguration of their functioning as priests was developed and inserted here to form a precedent for their appeal for authenticity of their role in Israel's priesthood.

The story is simply recounted and lacks any elaborate embellishments of the massacre per se. The writer is obviously much more concerned with the Levites and their loyalty in the execution of their duty to YHWH than with the bloody punishment that resulted. Accordingly, as Moses weighs the פָּרֵעַ of the people and the shame of their sin, he calls for an affirmation of fidelity to YHWH with the words חַי לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ. The Levites respond and are subsequently instructed to carry out a slaughter of the people whereby some 3,000 men fall by the sword. The massacre was meted out without discrimination and brother fell at the hand of brother. The reward for their participation in the judgment against the people was, it appears, their consecration to the service of YHWH.

Superficially it is possible to see a structural cohesion between this unit and the rest of the chapter. The reference to Aaron in verse 25 throws us back to the preceding paragraph. Also the massacre is in no way

Testament (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), p. 187; D. M. G. Stalker, "Exodus," Peake's Commentary on the Bible (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd., 1962); Rylaarsdam, op. cit.; McNeile, op. cit.

antithetical to the concession made by YHWH in verse 14. It appears that there needed to be some kind of self-purging on the part of the people themselves--an attempt to rid itself of the evil from within its own structure. Although the massacre was condoned and commanded by YHWH (v 27), it was instigated by Moses (vv 26ff.) and perpetrated by the tribe of Levi. It was expressly an internal conflict: וְהָרְגוּ אִישׁ-אֶת-אֶחָיו וְאִישׁ אֶת-רֵעֵהוּ וְאִישׁ אֶת-קַרְבּוֹ. As such it was distinct from the punishment of the plague (v 35) in which the whole nation is affected by an external source. This infliction is perceived to be directly from YHWH as his retribution on the whole people since all were deemed guilty.

The crucial problem in the whole narrative represented by chapter 32 is why the final writer/redactor allowed two different punishments to co-exist. It is probable that the punishments reflect two different sources. Yet it is interesting to note that in vv. 30ff. Moses seeks to make atonement for the people. Since the search for atonement pre-dates the punishment of the plague (vv 34, 35) as witnessed to by most scholars and post-dates the levitical massacre (וַיִּהְיֶה כְּחַחֲרֵת) it becomes clearly apparent that the massacre was not considered to be in any way propitiatory! This observation will allow us to suppose a real distinction in the two kinds of punishment to which allusion has been made. That is, the massacre and the plague are not mutually exclusive but represent, on the one hand, a purging of the

nation from within and, on the other, a propitiatory punishment from without.

Many of the major motifs of the chapter are reflected in this unit. The strong and decisive leadership Moses provides for the nation, the pathetic figure of Aaron, the severity of Israel's sin and the need for retribution to take place are all included. These phenomena give credence to its contextual appropriation in the whole narrative of the apostasy although there are some elements indicative of an interest in the Levites per se and the origin of their claim to Israel's hierocracy.¹²⁴

Having utterly destroyed the symbol of the apostasy and sought an explanation from Aaron, Moses now turns his attention to restoring order in the camp and disciplining the people. Moses had taken note of אֶת־הָעָם כִּי פָרַע הָיָא (v 25). The meaning of this enigmatic פָּרַע is uncertain. It is variously translated as "naked,"¹²⁵ "unbridled,"¹²⁶ "broken loose,"¹²⁷ "let loose,"¹²⁸ "out of control,"¹²⁹ "out of

¹²⁴Cf. the discussion in chapter III, p. 247.

¹²⁵J. W. Etheridge, Targums (London; Longman, Green, Longman & Roberts, 1862), p. 552; AV.

¹²⁶Dillmann, loc. cit.; Keil & Delitzsch, loc.cit.

¹²⁷S.R.Driver, Exodus (Cambridge: University Press, 1918), p. 354; P.C.Johnson, "Exodus," Wycliffe Bible Commentary (London: Oliphants Ltd., 1933), p. 83; Noth, op. cit., p. 242; Cassuto, loc. cit.; RV; RSV.

¹²⁸McNeile, loc. cit.

¹²⁹Childs, op. cit., p. 555, 570; NEB: NAS.

hand,"¹³⁰ "run wild."¹³¹ The AV reflects the Vulgate's translation of nudatus whereas the LXX uses the word δισεσκέδασται with perhaps the association of the reckless abandon of revelry in mind. It was noted in connection with verse 18 that the understanding of the phenomenon as revelry influenced the LXX to describe the event as ἐξαρχόντων οἴνου. In view of this it seems reasonable to suppose the scene which greeted Moses in verse 25 to be a type of ecstatic abandonment--hence the LXX's rendering δισεσκέδασται.

Other occurrences of the word in the Old Testament canon suggest the idea of lacking restraint. When applied to hair the context seems to indicate letting it hang loose, unbound and unattended (Num. 5:18; 6:5). Somewhat comparable to this are the commands in Leviticus given to Moses and Aaron (10:6) and to the priests (21:10) concerning the uncovering of the head. They were instructed not to uncover their heads, that is, not to unbind them. Presumably the idea was that they should maintain a modicum of restraint in a given situation. When the wisdom writer advises his son to avoid evil (Prov. 4:15) he uses וַיַּנְחֵהוּ to signify leaving it alone or paying no attention to it. A Niphal use of the verb in Prov. 29:18 may well have been written with the

¹³⁰Jerusalem Bible.

¹³¹NAB.

apostasy of the golden calf in mind: בִּאֵין חֲזוֹן פָּרַע
וְעָם. The expression may well be rendered, "Where
 there is no vision the people lack restraint," though
 "...are let loose" might readily be substituted. The
 other Exodus usage of פָּרַע (5:4) occurs in the Hiphil
 stem where Moses and Aaron are asked לָכֵהּ
תִּפְרִיעוּ אֶת-הָעָם. The context indicates that the
 expression is parallel to וְהִשְׁבַּתְתֶּם אֹתָם לַעֲבֹלָתָם
 (v 5). It may be reasonable to suppose that תִּפְרִיעוּ
 might imply that Moses and Aaron caused the people to be
 loosed from their work, or that they removed the re-
 straint of work from them, or that they caused the people
 to be unattentive to their tasks. Due to the awkwardness
 of the phrase, several scholars opt for the LXX's ren-
 dering of διαστρέφετε for תִּפְרִיעוּ.¹³²
 It may be that פָּרַע does have such a nuance of dis-
 tracting the people from work, but in view of all the
 other occurrences of the verb throughout the canon it
 seems most likely that it has not and the LXX has been a
 little too free in its rendering. Neither can one depend
 on the Syriac version's understanding of verse 25, viz.
לִטְנִין לְהָם, for there seems no justification
 for such a textual emendation. The sense of לִטְנִין
לְהָם, of course, is appropriate to the context but
 it seems to be an attempt to simplify the meaning of the
 text. The more difficult expression פָּרַע הָיָה, in

¹³²Cassuto, op. cit., p. 67; Childs, op. cit.,
 p. 91.

the opinion of the present investigator, ought to be retained.

The recurrence of the verb in the same verse in the form כִּי-פָרַעַה with Aaron as the subject of the action may well reinforce the conviction that פָּרַעַ is original and does reflect the disposition of the apostates. The final ה is an unusual form, possibly an archaic spelling.¹³³ To account for the retention of the archaic spelling, Cassuto postulates a paronomasia between פָּרַעַה and six other words of similar sound (בָּרַעַה and הָרַעַה (v 12); הָרַעַה (v 14); בָּרַעַה (v 17); בָּרַעַ (v 22); and פָּרַעַ (v 25). Supposedly the Masoretes retained the archaic forms פָּרַעַה (v 25) and בָּרַעַה (v 17) to emphasize the similarity between them and the related expressions of verses 12 and 14.

The further complication in this verse is the meaning of the phrase לְשַׂדְּוָה בְּקִדְיָהָ. The 'traditional' rendering of "to the derision (or shame) of their enemies" seems to carry the greatest weight for possible interpretation. This understanding of שַׂדְּוָה is derived from the versions of the LXX and Theodotion which translate it ἐπίχαρμα with its connotations of "derision" and more graphically, "malignant joy."¹³⁴ BDB also cites "derision" as a possible meaning

¹³³Cassuto, op. cit., p. 421.

¹³⁴H.G.Liddell and R.Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), p. 672.

of the Hebrew word. Strictly speaking, the literal sense of the word should be "a whispering" since it stems from a root שׁוּשׁ meaning "to whisper." This rendering, however, might only raise more problems than it solves for what would be the nature of such whispering? Evidently the effect of the nation's שׁוּשׁ was a derogatory one on the part of their enemies. There is a distinct possibility, of course, that שׁוּשׁ is an ancient poetic expression as Driver has suggested. Unfortunately there is no way that it is possible to substantiate his proposal, for this is the only occurrence of the Hebrew word in this form. To make explicit the ignominious effect of Israel's שׁוּשׁ upon their enemies several versions including Aquila, Symmachus, Vulgate, Targumim and Syriac have εἰς ὄνομα ῥύπου¹³⁵ (שׁוּשׁ).

Contrary to the consensus of opinion on the nature of the שׁוּשׁ being of a disreputable sort, Gesenius' recusant thesis appeals to שׁוּשׁ as a disused root meaning to thrust, cast or put to flight, a parallel to שׁוּשׁ. שׁוּשׁ, therefore, would refer to an overthrow of one's enemies. One might see the attractiveness of Gesenius' idea if there could be a substantiation of a paronomasia between שׁוּשׁ and

¹³⁵R. Kittel (ed.), Biblia Hebraica (Stuttgart: Wurttembergische Bibelanstalt, 1937), p. 129n; Dillmann, op. cit., p. 341.

אָס דאָס. That is, his understanding of אָס דאָס might have some credibility if one could prove the idea of casting away or putting to flight which, according to Gesenius, is inherent in the word (and for which evidence is lacking), was deliberately related to the concept of letting loose in לָרַחֵם. In other words the thrust of the verse would be something along the lines of: "When Moses saw that the people were loosed, for Aaron had loosed them to cast away (overthrow) their enemies." One can only conclude that this rendering is incomprehensible, it does not accord with the sense of the context and it does not explain the significance of the initial וְ in וַיַּרְא מֹשֶׁה.

As we suggested earlier, the traditional translation of this enigmatic sentence is the one to be preferred. The rendering of the verse could then be "When Moses saw that the people lacked restraint for Aaron had let them go loose for a derision among their enemies." But what can one say of the meaning of the sentence? What is one to understand by the expressions "lacked restraint," "letting loose," and a "derision"? What did Moses see and why did their enemies contemplate them with disdain?

The phenomenon which greeted Moses can be readily discerned from the canonical context of the chapter. Whether it was the apostasy per se or the effects of the apostasy on the subsequent behaviour of the people is

hardly relevant. The fact is that it is impossible to dichotomize between the behaviour which incorporated the apostasy and the behaviour affected by it. The two are inextricably interwoven. וְגִּדְּלוּ must refer to the apostasy and its contingent revelry and abandonment. Johnson specifies the loosening of the people from all restraint and all allegiance to YHWH as that which resulted in the contempt of their enemies.¹³⁶ Both Driver's and Ewald's conclusions regarding the raison d'être of the אֱלֹהֵי הַבַּיִת וְהַמִּזְבֵּחַ is quite similar: "their foes would deride when they heard that they had deserted their national God."¹³⁷ There is general agreement that the אֱלֹהֵי הַבַּיִת could not be caused by the erection of the image per se since such an occurrence was not abnormal to the surrounding nations.¹³⁸ One might add, in view of what has been said earlier, that the ideas of the invisible YHWH and the golden calf as his pedestal are not incompatible and would easily co-exist in the thinking of the Israelites and their neighbours. Again, attempts to get at the heart of what caused the "malignant joy" of Israel's enemies have resulted in McNeile's suggestion that it might have been caused by the Israelites fighting

¹³⁶Johnson, loc. cit.

¹³⁷E. Ewald, History of Israel, ii, 182, cited in Driver, loc. cit.

¹³⁸Dillmann, loc. cit.; McNeile, loc. cit.

among themselves,¹³⁹ and Dillmann's: "zu einem Gegenstand der Schadenfreude der selben."¹⁴⁰ Rabbi Hertz, Keil and Delitzsch believe it was God's punishment of Israel's sin.¹⁴¹ However, if one is to take seriously the causal relationship between the erection of the calf and the nation's response to it, then it appears evident that the לְשֹׁדֵי בְּקִדְתָּהּ must refer to the events of the incident in toto! That is, the view of the apostasy must be an all-embracing one, it is more than a prima facie construction of a golden calf but all that was subsumed in a rebellion against YHWH. This was the object of the derision--the God Israel had claimed so much for, from the events of the exodus to the inauguration of a theocracy, had become passé! Such an understanding of the material accords with our earlier observation in our structural analysis of the book. There we had noticed that Israel had been translated from the domain of Pharaoh's lordship in Egypt to the sovereignty of YHWH in their wilderness experience. He had delivered them, guided them, protected them and provided for them. Pharaoh had been removed from the area of control and theocracy was being established. In this, God's people were to experience the rule of God, the coming of his

¹³⁹McNeile, op. cit.

¹⁴⁰Dillmann, loc. cit.

¹⁴¹J. H. Hertz, The Pentateuch and Haftorahs: Exodus (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 378; Keil & Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 227.

kingdom that, in turn, they would be a paradigm for the surrounding nations, a Light to lighten the Gentiles so to speak. But with their rebellion against YHWH the theocracy was annulled, the deliverance abrogated and the light stifled! This return to the forces of that which opposed God (Acts 7:39) was the object of לשחצה בקריהם.

In the environment created by the apostasy Moses leaps into action, with the terse cry ד' ליהוה אלי! It has been perceived that all the people had been responsible for the apostasy of the golden calf. The writer has explicitly said so! Such expressions as כל-העם (v 2); נשיכם בוניכם ובנותיכם (v 3); עמך אשר העלית מארץ מצרים (v 4, 8); ישראל (v 7, cf. vv 11f., 23); ואכלם ואעשה אותך לגוי גדול (v 10); זכר...ארבה את-זרעכם ככוכבי השמים... (v 13); את-בני את-קול העם (v 17); ישראל (v 20) provide ample evidence that the whole nation was held accountable for חטאה גדלה. The cry of Moses ד' יהוה אלי was, therefore, the first attempt to discriminate between the people. It was a call to decision, to acknowledge allegiance to YHWH--"the 'real Yahweh who had nothing to do with the bull image."¹⁴² Aaron's attempt in verse 5 to encourage worship of YHWH at the altar of the golden calf had resulted in a too contrived deux ex machina.

¹⁴²Noth, op. cit., p. 250.

The picture portrayed of Moses standing בַּשַּׁעַר הַחֹמֶת is frequently taken to indicate a source which follows on from verses 15-19a, that is, to a time before Moses had actually entered the camp. In this regard, Dillmann underlines the fact that the Israelite leader is not in the main square as verses 19b-24 would lead us to believe, but expressly at the gate or entry-point of the camp, the "Eingang."¹⁴³ This certainly makes a great deal of sense, however seen in its canonical context, Moses' position at the gate might indicate a heightening of the drama surrounding the impassioned plea דַּי לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ. In other words, Moses might have been calling for those who wished to admit fidelity to YHWH to move outside the camp, away from the scene and association of the crime. Hence the call for a declaration of allegiance involved a renouncement of and separation from the rest of the people. The idea of coming apart is not an unfamiliar one in the Pentateuch. עֵבֶר is used in Exod. 13:12 of the consecration of the first-born to YHWH. It was to be separated for the service and use of God. Similarly in Num. 6:9, 12, נִזְרִי refers to the dedication of a Nazirite as one who was to be separated by an asseveration to YHWH (Num. 6:1). The very nature of the frequently used וְתָרָם is defined by Girdlestone as referring to "the idea of position or

¹⁴³Dillmann, op. cit., p. 341.

relationship as existing between God and some person or thing consecrated to Him."¹⁴⁴ שְׁדָּקָה is used to apply to the ground where Moses encountered God (Exod. 3:5); to the Tabernacle (Exod. 29:43); to the inner sanctuary (Exod. 25:8); to the altar (Exod. 29:36); to the gifts (Exod. 28:28); and offerings (Exod. 29:27). It relates to the Sabbath day (Exod. 20:8, 11). It parallels עֲבָדָה in alluding to the first-born (Exod. 13:2). It distinguishes the priesthood (Exod. 28:44).

The point involved in every case is relation or contact of God. Thus the Sabbath day was holy because God rested thereon, and it was to be set apart by Israel as a pledge that He had sanctified or set apart the people to Himself (Exod. 31:13).¹⁴⁵

The relational idea which is the very essence of these concepts (עֲבָדָה, קָדָשׁ and שְׁדָּקָה) of separation accords well with the understanding of Moses calling not for a plebiscite amongst the people, but a positive segregation from the people of those who wished to pledge themselves to YHWH. Therefore the idea that answering the demand of Moses, יִיחָדֶנּוּ אֵלַי, meant separating oneself from the congregation is further enhanced by the fact that it demanded a tangible expression of leaving the environs of the camp and approaching the שַׁעַר הַדֶּחַיִּה where Moses stood.

¹⁴⁴R. B. Girdlestone, Synonyms of the Old Testament (London: James Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 1897), p. 175.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., p. 176.

The theme of the exodus itself was a coming out, a separation from the dominion of Egypt. It has been demonstrated in the previous chapter that the book of Exodus, taken as a whole in its present shape, is concerned with a deliverance of both positive and negative aspects. It was a translation from the realm of the demonic, the lordship of Pharaoh, to the rule and sovereignty of YHWH. Service had been transferred from building the cities of Pithom and Raamses (1:11) to the construction of the tabernacle (35-38). Such a 'coming out' (NS') of Egypt (13:3, 25:15, Deut. 11:10; Josh. 2:10, 5:4f.; I Kings 8:10; Prov. 12:13; Hag. 2:5), is surely in basic consonance with the idea inherent in Moses uttering his propitious appeal דַּי לִיהוָה אֵלַי. From among the people and the camp, Moses was calling out a people for the service of YHWH.

It is significant that only the בְּנֵי לֵוִי responded to the call of Moses (v 26b). Such a phenomenon raises several questions. Does it suggest that the Levites alone had remained faithful to YHWH while the nation lapsed into apostasy? Did the entire tribe respond to Moses' plea? What had been their role prior to this incident?

Despite attempts, at different times, to excuse the Levites from active participation in the apostasy of the golden calf,¹⁴⁶ evidence would indicate the contrary.

¹⁴⁶Noth, loc. cit.; Davies, loc. cit.; Hertz, loc. cit.; Cole, op. cit., p. 220.

The inference was made earlier that the chapter seemed to imply that every faction in the nation was guilty of the odious sin. This corporate guilt excused no-one and Moses' appeal, נָדַי לִיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי, represented a call for repentance, for YHWH was offering his people another chance (cf. v 14). Remember, the entire nation had been threatened with extinction (v 10) and there is no suggestion that anyone defied the erection of the golden calf. One can reasonably conclude that the בְּנֵי לֵוִי did take part in the apostasy, but as Moses called for a decision of allegiance they rallied to him. But why only the Levites? If one bears in mind that Moses was of that tribe, it is reasonable to postulate a heightened affinity between him and בְּנֵי לֵוִי. In other words, the "exceptional and fervent loyalty"¹⁴⁷ which the Levites felt for Moses was a peculiar one determined by kinship. When Moses' leadership was placed into jeopardy they would be most expected to respond to his alarm. כָּל-בְּנֵי לֵוִי probably doesn't mean that every member of the tribe moved out to join Moses since the expression must be compatible with verse 27, וְהָרְגוּ אִישׁ-אֶת-אָחִיו וְאִישׁ אֶת-רֵעֵהוּ וְאִישׁ אֶת-קָרְבוֹ אָח. Conceivably, אָח may parallel רֵעַ and קָרֵב and not refer to a blood relationship.¹⁴⁸ Yet it is nonetheless clear that

¹⁴⁷Clements, loc. cit.

¹⁴⁸E.g. Cole, op. cit., p. 220; Hertz, loc. cit.

the writer of Deut. 33:9 considers it an infraction against actual members of the tribe and family. In his blessing of the tribe of Levi, Moses seems to refer to the incident recorded in Exod. 32:27f. and explicitly cites their indiscrimination with respect to גֵּנֹם, דֹּנֵם, תִּנֵּם and גִּבֹּם. Cassuto's reference to a hyperbolic meaning for לֹא must surely be the correct one.¹⁴⁹ In other words, what probably occurred when Moses called for a radical commitment to YHWH was that a large number of members from his own tribe, בְּנֵי לֵוִי, aligned themselves with his leadership and awaited his further instructions.

Moses now takes on the role of prophet (v 27) with a characteristically prophetic utterance: כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. This prophetic phrase also occurs in chapter 5:1 and 4:22 as Moses confronts Pharaoh with the demand for freedom. Interestingly on those occasions it was performed on the expressed wish of YHWH.¹⁵⁰ In chapter 32 there seems insufficient evidence to suggest that Moses was acting upon a divine directive. Indeed, Noth's observation that it was Moses himself who arranged the punishment¹⁵¹ cannot be far from the truth.¹⁵² Yet Moses undoubtedly felt it to be God's will and this

¹⁴⁹Cassuto, op. cit., p. 421.

¹⁵⁰Exod. 3:18.

¹⁵¹Noth, loc. cit.

¹⁵²Cassuto, loc. cit.

may be all the writer is attempting to express. Who is to say that Moses was mistaken? Such a conclusion would be beyond the scope of this, or perhaps any investigation. Nevertheless it may be useful to bear in mind what the author's purposes were. The writer's major concern in this paragraph is with the Levites per se, their devotion to YHWH and their ordination to Israel's priesthood. This being the case, might it not be reasonable to assume, since the massacre is told without embellishment, that other paraphernalia surrounding the slaughter and integral to it, including the origin of the command to initiate destruction, should receive as little or less attention? One would not expect, then, the writer to be concerned enough to deal adequately with the problem of whether or not Moses was acting on God's command or to make the effort to include God's prior directive. One way or another, it is not possible to have any certainty on the matter. The fact remains that Moses assumes the role of prophet and prescribes radical surgery for the nation with all the authority which is conferred upon him by his reference to YHWH as the source of his message.

The injunction placed upon the Levites was both exigent and inclement: שִׁחוּ אִישׁ-אֶחָדָם עַל-יָדוֹ... וְהָרְגוּ... Yet the Levites measured up to the task accorded them. The result was the massacre of 3,000!

The slaughter was implemented by כֶּלֶב which, although it can be used of a knife (Josh. 5:2, 3) and of a tool used in hewing stones (Exod. 20:25), most generally refers to a sword as a weapon of war. It is frequently

employed with verbs which suggest violent action: פגע (Exod. 5:3); גה (Exod. 5:21; 22:23); ירש (Exod. 15:9); כח (Num. 21:24); נכל (Deut. 32:42); etc. The verb in this context is גה. The scope of the massacre appears to cover the entire camp, לשער בפתח לשער. The expression לשער obviously implies from one end of the camp to the other.¹⁵³ The additional עברו ושובו emphasizes the thoroughness with which the Levites were required to execute the charge. The procedure, then, was to cover the whole camp with the body of Levites moving to and fro and from end to end! The process itself may have been a haphazard type of thing in which no regard was paid to kinship nor acquaintance.¹⁵⁴ Another possibility might be that particular victims were selected on the basis of the part they played in the apostasy such as instigators or ringleaders.¹⁵⁵ The former idea is more likely to be the correct one in view of our earlier discussion on the extent of guilt. That is to say, because the guilt of the apostasy was shared by all and not all responded to Moses' call for repentance (v 26), and because we have noted that the drinking of the water in verse 20 was not a trial by ordeal concerned with guilt,

¹⁵³Hertz, op. cit., p. 378; Cassuto, loc. cit.

¹⁵⁴Keil & Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 227; Cole, loc. cit.

¹⁵⁵Cassuto, loc. cit.; Davies, op. cit., p. 234; Etheridge, op. cit., p. 553 (where Targum Palestine suggests the guilty were marked in the nostril!).

then it remains likely that there was no distinct group among the people for whom this slaughter was intended. Calvin believes the massacre to have been a means of crushing a rebellion and rendering any future mutinous aspirations insipid.¹⁵⁶ Dillmann is of the same conviction¹⁵⁷ and this may be the best explanation of the phenomenon. The levitical slaying, then, was both a judgment and a deterrent. It was a random killing of some 3,000 persons from every tribe, including Levi, and every aspect of the camp. In a sense it was a token punishment for the entire nation. The number slain is comparatively small if one is to take seriously the reports in earlier chapters of the book: וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל פָּרוּ וַיִּשְׂרְצוּ וַיִּרְבוּ וַיַּעֲצוּר בְּעָאֵד כְּעָאֵד וַתִּחַלֵּא הָאָרֶץ אֹתָם (Exod. 1:7); Pharaoh's expression that the Children of Israel were רַב וַעֲצוּם כְּחַיִּי (Exod. 1:9; cf. vv 10, 12, 20); and, most explicitly, the reference to כָּשֶׁשׁ-חַיִּים אֶלֶף (Exod. 12:37) which, apparently, did not include children or aliens (Exod. 12:37, 38).

It has been observed previously that the text of Exodus does not elaborate upon the events of the slaughter, save only to note that וַיִּפֹּל חֵן-הָעָם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא כְּשֶׁלַּחַת אֶלֶף אִישׁ. A few versions of the Vulgate emend the

¹⁵⁶Keil & Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 228.

¹⁵⁷Dillmann, loc. cit.

number to 23,000,¹⁵⁸ but without warrant. Huesman¹⁵⁹ suggests an influence from I Corinthians 10:7 which more likely refers to Israel's plague in Num. 25:9. The Vulgate emendation is clearly in error. Unquestionably only 3,000 persons fell by the levitical sword. Such a small number may well help to authenticate a credence in the historicity of the incident and allow one to plagiarize Dillmann: "Unglaublich ist daran nichts."

With verse 29 one spans the causal nexus to the result of the levitical slaying and the declared loyalty of the לַיהוָה לְלֵוִי to YHWH. The Levites are rewarded with the priesthood. They receive YHWH's blessing. The enigmatic phrase וַיִּמָּלֵךְ יְהוָה is generally taken by commentators and scholars to specify ordination although its origin remains in doubt. To "fill the hand" is taken figuratively to mean to institute to a priestly office.¹⁶⁰ Usually it occurs in the pi'el verb stem with respect to the consecration of priests¹⁶¹ or the consecration of the altar.¹⁶² There is no doubt in the mind of

¹⁵⁸Biblia Sacra: Iuxta Latinam Vulgatae Versionem: II, Exodus-Leviticus (Romae: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1929), p. 248.

¹⁵⁹J. E. Huesman, "Exodus," The Jerome Biblical Commentary, I (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), p. 62.

¹⁶⁰F. Brown, S.R. Driver, C.A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), p. 570.

¹⁶¹Exod. 28:41; 29:9,29,33,35; Lev. 8:33; 16:32; 21:10; Num. 3:3; Judg. 17:5,12; I Kgs. 13:33; I Chron. 29:5; II Chron. 13:9; 29:31.

¹⁶²Ezek. 43:26.

the present writer that the phrase reflects some type of formula depicting ordination or consecration.

The verb לְנָתַן is frequently considered to be a qal imperative plural form indicating a command given to the Levites by Moses. Numerous scholars so understand it.¹⁶³ However, the imperative is somewhat awkward to the sense of this unit. One wonders how Moses can order a procedure which implies self-ordination. It might also be argued that it would have been more appropriate for consecration to have preceded the slaughter of the 3,000 rather than follow it. There is an alternative to understanding the functioning of לְנָתַן. It is to adopt a textual emendation based upon the meaning of the LXX's ἑπληρώσατε and the Vulgate's consecrastis.¹⁶⁴ The result is to render the Hebrew סִמְּנוּ which could be translated "you have consecrated." Targum Onkelos offers little help in offering the verb לְנָתַן in place of לְנָתַן. The option could be considered either a third person perfect plural indicative pa''el or

¹⁶³A. Dillmann, Die Bücher Exodus und Leviticus (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1880), p. 342; S. R. Driver, The Book of Exodus (Cambridge: University Press, 1918), p. 354; A. Cole, Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary (London: Tyndale Press, 1973), p. 220; J. H. Hertz, ed., The Pentateuch and Haftorahs: Hebrew Text, English Translation with Commentary: Exodus (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 379; also AV and ASB.

¹⁶⁴B. S. Childs, Exodus: A Commentary (London: S.C.M. Press, 1974), p. 555; J. P. Hyatt, Commentary on Exodus (London: Oliphants, 1971), p. 310; also RSV and NEB.

or p''al or a plural imperative pa''el of the verb

גִּרָּךְ, to draw near or offer (sacrifices).¹⁶⁵

Etheridge opts for this alternative in translating the phrase in verse 29: "Present your offerings."¹⁶⁶ But

however appealing and sensible this might appear to be, the problem is that one faces a feminine form of the

verb גִּרָּךְ which makes an imperative rendering difficult. And an indicative mood (viz. "they approached your hand") makes little sense.

The difficulty of comprehending the functioning of the verb גִּרָּךְ in the MT is solved for the present writer if גִּרָּךְ is recognized as a third person perfect plural indicative pi'el form. Since the radical letter ל has a sheva, it is not surprising to drop the dagesh. In so understanding the verb, two problems are avoided. First, since it is not considered to be a qal, it conforms more readily with its use in other occurrences in the formula וְגִרָּךְ by being conjugated as a pi'el stem. Second, the enigma of Moses' command that the Levites ordain themselves is removed. In the indicative sense of the verb, their act

¹⁶⁵W. B. Stevenson, Grammar of Palestinian Jewish Aramaic (Oxford: University Press, 1924), pp. 88f.; F. Rosenthal, ed., An Aramaic Handbook (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1967), p. 95.

¹⁶⁶J. W. Etheridge, The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan Ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch, I (London: Longman, Green, Longman & Roberts, 1862), p. 421.

of loyalty to YHWH itself has occasioned their ordination. The phrase would then be translated, "they filled your hand," or more passively, "your hand is filled." In other words Moses declares to the Levites on the basis of their obedience to the task entrusted to them, "To-day your hand is filled for YHWH" (כִּלְאֵן יָדְכֶם ה' יוֹם לִיהוָה). In this way, too, the phrase is particularly appropriate because their hands were indeed filled with the blood of their brethren. That blood, as a mark of their self-sacrificing obedience, became for them their ordination rite.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷The origin of the phrase כִּלְאֵן יָדְכֶם requires further explanation. There is a possibility that it is a derivative of the Akkadian idiom (ana) gat X. mullu which Hyatt suggests means "appoint to an office" (J. P. Hyatt, op. cit., p. 310), or if one is to follow McNeile's idea, the equation exists between the Hebrew נָתַן and the Assyrian malu which means "give" or "appoint." Either way, neither solution gets one to the heart of the problem which is to determine in what sense the hands were filled as a sign of taking up the priestly office. This must remain our concern since some relationship must have existed between being or becoming a priest and having one's hands filled.

In reflecting upon the duties of a priest it is possible to perceive several items that might be placed in his hand in the course of his everyday activities. Most obvious would be those items that played a role in the sacrificial cult system. The indication of Exod. 29:22ff. and Lev. 8:22-29 may well be that the most likely thing placed in the priest's hands was נֶזֶבֶן כִּלְאֵן. Another possibility advanced by Wellhausen was the first installment of a 'priestly fee' or the earnest money of a salary for his priestly office (A. H. McNeile, The Book of Exodus [London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 3rd ed., 1931], p. 585). To substantiate this view an appeal was made to Judg. 17:5-13 (J. P. Hyatt, loc. cit.)--but the argument is an implied one. The supposition was made that Micah's payment of the Levite in that passage עֲשֶׂרֶת כֶּסֶף לַיְהוָה (v 10) was equivalent to וַיַּחֲלֵה מִיכָה אֶת-יָד הַלֵּוִי in verse 12, and therefore that Micah filled the young

Kittel notes thirteen mediaeval manuscripts, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac version and the LXX all of which prefer a plural form of the noun, viz. "hands." The logic of the emendation is understandable. Ordinarily a plural noun would make better sense in the context of verse 29. But since we have considered the nature of the phrase □□□' יללל to be an ordination formula there is no need to insist on a plural rendering. In its other occurrences in the canon, the formula consistently utilizes a singular noun construction.¹⁶⁸

priest's hand with money. However, this suggestion has no justification in a rigorous exegesis of the text. There is no reason to suppose that the payment of the Levite is synonymous with ordination or installation. Indeed, it may be more appropriate to think otherwise.

It is more conceivable that the ordination rites would reflect the nature of the office which is primarily spiritual and cultic vis-à-vis that which is mundane and secular. In view of the more specific references in Exod. 29:22f. and Lev. 8:22-29 it seems clear that the object placed in the hands for ordination was a sacrificial ram. In these instances it is expressly indicated that the beast is actually placed in the hands of Aaron and his sons. Moses, in filling their hands, is complying with the instructions given him by YHWH in Exod. 28:41 to ordain (□□□' יללל) and consecrate them (□□□' יללל) for the purpose of enabling them to serve as priests. The present writer is convinced that this is precisely what is involved in Exod. 32:29. The concern here is with the sacrifice of ordination and not with any expiatory rite (Cf. A. Dillmann, loc. cit.; C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch, II [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., reprint 1971], p. 229). יללל

□□□' is simply a formula of consecration borne out by the singular form of □□□' despite a plural possessive pronoun.

¹⁶⁸Exod. 28:41; 29:9,29,33,35; Lev. 8:33; Num. 3:3; I Kgs. 13:33; II Chron. 29:31.

כִּי אִשׁ גִּבּוֹר וּבְאִתּוֹ discloses

the reason why the Levites were being consecrated to receive YHWH's blessing. The particle כִּי must be understood as causal. That is to say that it was because every man was against his son and his brother (both nouns being in construct state and the preterite פָּלַט understood) that they were placed in a position whereby they could be consecrated for God's service. It is comprehended in this way by several modern English translations and by not a few commentators.¹⁶⁹ An alternative understanding of the particle is evident in its translation "at the cost of..."¹⁷⁰ This makes better sense if one accepts the emendation וּלְאִתּוֹ ("you have consecrated") espoused by Childs and others. In favouring the MT's וּלְאִתּוֹ, the present writer prefers to interpret the verse as follows: "And Moses said, 'Today your hand is filled for YHWH because each one was against his son and against his brother....'"¹⁷¹ The blessing bestowed upon

¹⁶⁹A. Dillmann, loc. cit.; S. R. Driver, op. cit., p. 355; U. Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Exodus, I (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), p. 422; also NEB, NAB and NAS.

¹⁷⁰B. S. Childs, op. cit., p. 555; also Jerusalem Bible and RSV.

¹⁷¹By way of completion, the thesis of A. H. McNeile should be included. McNeile parodies the translation of the AV and RV, "yea, every man with his son and his brother." The implication he makes is that the Levites are to fill their hand with the son or brother whom they had slaughtered as with a sacrificial offering, op. cit., p. 586. No light is shed on the matter by the LXX, Syriac or Vulgate all of which omit the particle, e.g. ἐκαστος ἐν τῷ υἱῷ ἢ ἐν τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ.

them, therefore as a result, was the priesthood. Their ordination was a recognition of the Levites' supreme loyalty to YHWH.

Verses 30-35

In the closing section of the chapter, Moses turns again to his role of intercessor in what has been described as "the noblest passage in the book."¹⁷² Israel's predicament has been clearly defined. The apostasy has to run its full course. The people have been guilty of a heinous crime. The wrath of YHWH has been stayed. Moses has confronted Aaron and dis-assembled the golden calf. He has subjected the people to a national purging in which 3,000 were killed. Of those that remained alive, all were culpable, but they had not been punished. Moses now proceeds to deal with the offenders who are still alive.

Despite the hypothesis of many that verses 30-34 are essentially redundant given the fact that YHWH has already been appeased in verses 11-14,¹⁷³ it is the contention of the present writer that this is not necessarily the case. In verses 11-14, Moses succeeded simply

¹⁷²G. H. Davies, Exodus (London: SCM Press, 1967), p. 235.

¹⁷³E.g. A. Kuenen, The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined, trans. J. W. Colenso (London), p. 99.

in averting the destruction of the Israelites by YHWH in his anger. Moses had pointed out the illogicality of such a course of action and reminded God of his commitment to his covenant promises. The result was not forgiveness--the issue of God forgiving Israel was never at stake--but rather a change in YHWH's intent! Having achieved that change, it was subsequently necessary to pursue the question of forgiveness for the nation. And Moses now endeavours to do that in this section by proposing his own death in order that Israel may be forgiven and live.

We have seen in the discussion of earlier chapters that the viewpoint espoused in this thesis is not only similar to that held by many of the ancients in their understanding of the relationship between the two intercessory sections of the chapter,¹⁷⁴ for several modern notables are thus persuaded.¹⁷⁵ S. R. Driver affirms that "the two passages are so far consistent that whereas in verses 11-13 Moses had only petitioned

¹⁷⁴Moses Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, II: Exodus, trans. by C. B. Chavel (New York: Shilo Publ. Ho. Inc., 1973), pp. 549-550; M. Poole, Synopsis Criticorum aliorumque Sacrae Scripturae interpretum et commentatorum, I (London: Cornelium Bee, 1669-76), p. 491.

¹⁷⁵C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch, Vol. III (Edinburgh, 1865), p. 230; U. Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Exodus, trans. by I. Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), p. 422.

that the people might not be destroyed, he now petitions for its entire forgiveness."¹⁷⁶

Verse 30 begins with Moses calling the people to a recognition of their sin and the grievous nature of it. Calvin has suggested the reason for such a call was that the people might more earnestly give themselves to repentance.¹⁷⁷ Matthew Henry, by contrast, believed that it indicated that atonement was no easy thing.¹⁷⁸ In view of the fact of YHWH's struggle between doing good and doing evil in vv. 7-14, it may well be true that the writer is intimating that such is YHWH's struggle that forgiveness is never an automatically assured type of thing! Now it is certain Henry would not share the present writer's understanding of verses 12 and 14 which have been discussed earlier. Nonetheless, it is evident that the biblical writer has used the emphatic pronoun "you" (אַתָּה) to emphasize the nation's culpability and has introduced the element of a 'hope' of achieving forgiveness rather than a certainty of obtaining it with

¹⁷⁶S. R. Driver, Exodus (Cambridge: University Press, 1918), p. 355.

¹⁷⁷J. Calvin, The Pentateuch (Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers & Authors, Inc., n.d.), p. 1007.

¹⁷⁸M. Henry, An Exposition of the Old and New Testaments, I (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1706) on Exod. 32:30; P. C. Johnson, "Exodus," Wycliffe Bible Commentary (London: Oliphants, 1963), p. 83.

the use of the word יָלַן.¹⁷⁹ That uncertainty is further emphasized in an interesting manner by the Targumim of Pseudo-Jonathan and Neophiti. The latter adds to Moses' comment in the verse, "and I will beseech mercy from before the Lord." It is evident from a history of interpretation that the meaning conveyed by verse 30 did intimate a sense of uncertainty with regard to Israel's future relationship with YHWH. So it is with a certain amount of apprehension that Moses returns to the mountain to seek atonement for the nation's sin.¹⁸⁰ The concept expressed by רָפָא carries with it the idea of a "doing away" with sin, specifically a "covering" of sin.¹⁸¹ The atonement of which Moses speaks involves reconciliation between YHWH and his people and is naturally associated with forgiveness.¹⁸²

Atonement was not secured apart from the threat of judgment (vv 32,34 and 35). And integral to the threat was a visitation of that sin (v 34)--presumably the apostate sin of the golden calf and hence an

¹⁷⁹The LXX uses the expression ἐν ὧ to imply a greater surety that forgiveness will be granted.

¹⁸⁰The idea expressed here of God dwelling on the mountain has been attributed to the Elohist source, e.g. W. Beyerlin, Origins and History of the Oldest Sinaitic Traditions (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), p. 21; J. P. Hyatt, Exodus (London: Oliphants, 1971), p. 311.

¹⁸¹In this רָפָא represents the same root word from which "mercy-seat" (or "seat of covering") is derived, cf BDB, p. 497.

¹⁸²A. Dillmann, Die Bücher Exodus und Leviticus (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1880), p. 342.

"uncovered" sin--upon the people in the future. Now, if we perceive that judgment to be a type of appeasement--as the present writer is persuaded--it is possible to discern in the promise of the presence of YHWH's angel a covenantal relationship characterized by discord. Israel was deprived of the fullness of God's revelation--a theme reiterated in Exod. 33:1-3, 12-16; 34:9--and received only the promise of a judgment to come! What sort of atonement was this? If Israel's sin had indeed been "covered" it would have been remembered no longer against the nation. The fact that it was to be remembered and subsequently requited indicates that at this stage of the narrative at least, as chapter 32 draws to a close, Israel's apostasy remained un-atoned and "uncovered." What Moses did achieve in this second intercession was neither forgiveness nor atonement. It was rather Israel's benefit that the nation had not been disowned by YHWH. In verse 14 the nation was assured that it would not be destroyed, in verse 34 it was aware that it would not be disowned. The covenant relationship may well have been strained, maybe even fractured, but the situation was not irreparable. The 'gospel' of Exod. 34:6-10 is ample testimony to that fact!

Moses' intercessory prayer begins with confession (v 31). One may concede with John Calvin that "in such a case of wicked ingratitude nothing remained but freely to acknowledge their guilt..."¹⁸³ In any event Moses

¹⁸³J. Calvin, loc. cit.

reiterates Israel's crime. For the third time in the chapter the expression אֵלֶיךָ יְיָ is used to describe the nation's apostasy.¹⁸⁴ He had returned to the mountain on which YHWH was believed to dwell, away from the scene of the idolatry back to the intimacy of God's personal revelation. The earnestness of Moses' entreaty is denoted by the particle אֵלֶיךָ (cf. Gen. 50:17; Isa. 38:3; Neh. 1:5). And it is further emphasized by the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan which expands the sentence to read: "I supplicate of Thee, Thou Lord of all the world, before whom the darkness is as light!" On the other hand the Samaritan Pentateuch detracts from the entreaty by replacing the particle אֵלֶיךָ by אֵלֶיךָ. It does not change significantly the sense of the intercession. Interestingly, although the context of Exod. 32 has always made us fully aware of it (vv 2,3,4,24) verse 31 provides the only occasion in which the apostate image is explicitly referred to as אֵלֶיךָ יְיָ.

"But now (אֵלֶיךָ)....," Moses begins his entreaty in verse 32, "if you will forgive their sin..." Possibly the "now" moment can be seen in contrast to the "then" moment of the apostasy itself. Moses feels better able to elicit YHWH's forgiveness for the nation after the initial period of God's anger had subsided, the calf destroyed and inaugural punishment executed. Perhaps now,

¹⁸⁴verses 21 and 30.

it might be reasoned, YHWH would be of a more tolerant disposition! Moses never completes his initial petition: "if you will forgive their sin." It may be that the aposiopesis is done for effect and actually succeeded in strengthening the appeal. Or, conceivably, it may simply represent the earnestness of Moses' entreaty in rushing ahead to lay his own life on the line! Whatever the purpose of the aposiopesis, the meaning of the incomplete phrase is self-evident. It is made explicit by the LXX, the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan and Neophiti. They each supply the imperative "forgive!" This is plainly the understanding of the text.

If, on the contrary, YHWH will not forgive Isarel its great sin, Moses is prepared to have his name obliterated from God's book of the living. This sacrificial offer can be perceived in one of two ways. Most popularly it is viewed vicariously. That is to say Moses stood in place of the nation petitioning YHWH to direct his wrath away from Israel and unto Moses instead. He would receive himself the punishment due the nation.¹⁸⁵ A second way of understanding the text is not so much to conceive of Moses proposing to die on behalf of the

¹⁸⁵A position adopted by most of the ancients plus a majority of moderns, e.g. M. Noth, Exodus: A Commentary (London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 251; A. Dillmann, loc. cit.; C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 231.

the people as of dying along with the people.¹⁸⁶ It is the opinion of the present writer that this latter interpretation is the better alternative. So understood it is apparent that Moses is again rejecting the temptation of verse 10. If Israel could not be forgiven and re-instated as YHWH's peculiar people, then Moses did not wish to live that another nation could be raised up to replace them. So much had Moses come to identify himself with the people of Israel that to see them disowned by YHWH at this stage would be to deprive him of his leadership and rob him of his raison d'être!

The "book" to which Moses refers in verse 32 has been comprehended in a variety of ways. The idea of a heavenly book of records appeared appropriate in the Talmudic age. The Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan similarly understands it in its translation: "the book of the just." The idea seems to have been that God kept tally of an individual's goodness vis-à-vis his badness and by juxtaposing them was able to determine his relative merit. More appropriately, we can consider Moses' reference to have been "a metaphorical way of expressing the idea of 'the world of living men,' and at the same time stating the truth that every man's life or death is in God's hand."¹⁸⁷ This will need further elucidation.

¹⁸⁶U. Cassuto, op. cit., p. 423; J. Calvin, op. cit., p. 1008; A. Cole, Exodus (London: Tyndale Press, 1973), p. 221.

¹⁸⁷A. Cole, loc. cit.

The origin of the concept of God's Book (of the Living) is obscure. S. R. Driver suggested that the figure was probably borrowed from the custom of keeping a register of citizens of a town and cited Jer. 22:30 and Ezek. 13:9 as examples.¹⁸⁸ Cole supposes that the census lists like those in Num. 1 might be the origin of the expression.¹⁸⁹ But Hengstenberg has indicated that the "Book of the Living" might most appropriately reflect an Egyptian influence since lists and rolls were commonly used in that country at a time concomitant with Israel's bondage in Egypt.¹⁹⁰ Whatever its precise origin the meaning of the terminology is clear enough. It is merely a reference to all the people who were living and a picture of their names being known and placed in a book by God. To have one's name blotted out, then, was to signify death. Elsewhere it is called

סֵפֶר חַיִּים (Ps. 69:28; Isa. 4:3). In New Testament times this "Book of Life" connoted a book in which was inscribed the names of those destined for eternal life. There does not appear to be such a connotation, however, in the Old Testament's use of the expression. Although the righteous do have their names

¹⁸⁸S. R. Driver, op. cit., p. 355.

¹⁸⁹A. Cole, loc. cit. Num. 1 is generally attributed to P.

¹⁹⁰E. W. Hengstenberg, Egypt and the Books of Moses, trans. R. D. C. Robbins (Edinburgh: Thomas Clark, 1845), p. 205.

recorded in it (cf. Hab. 2:4), there the "Book of Life" is broad enough to include all the names of those who were preserved alive.

Moses ends his entreaty for Israel's forgiveness on a rather pathetic note. He had sought forgiveness for the nation, but if it could not be obtained then he preferred to die along with his people whom he had led from the hardships of Egypt. YHWH's reply to Moses is two-fold. In verse 33 he refuses to accept Moses' life either with or on behalf of the people and in verse 34 he promises neither to disown Israel nor to remit their punishment. Forgiveness, it seems, has neither been granted nor refused.

God, then, responds to the interceding love of the mediator with comfort and compromise. YHWH has no intention of seeing his servant Moses die. It is the guilty who must pay for their own folly: כִּי אִשָּׁא נָשָׂא וְאִשָּׁא נָשָׂא. Verse 33 clearly enunciates the principle of individual responsibility for sin. (A fact which had led Hyatt, for example, to postulate a late date for this verse.)¹⁹¹ The moral issue involved in allowing the innocent to die because of the sin of the guilty was raised again by the Targumist Pseudo-Jonathan who inserts into the speech of YHWH to Moses: "It is not right that I should blot out your name."

¹⁹¹J. P. Hyatt, op. cit., p. 311.

Moses was innocent and righteous--only the guilty would be punished.

On the basis of the principle of individual responsibility for sin outlined in verse 33 and subsequently punishment for sin, full forgiveness is denied. But the original plan to bring the people of Israel to Canaan to possess the land was still to be realized. YHWH had not given up on his promises to their forefathers. So a compromise is reached in verse 34. Instead of accompanying the people himself, YHWH designs to send his angel and although the nation's punishment has not been remitted it is postponed indefinitely.

Moses' prayer has been heard. He is instructed to return to the people--the LXX actually supplies the additional verb καταβηθι (reminiscent of verse 7)--and resume his role as leader of the nation. Israel was to leave Sinai and continue its journey to the land promised to their ancestors. The LXX supplies the missing word in the narrative of verse 34. "The place" is not specifically named in either the Greek or Hebrew texts but Canaan is patently in mind as the land Israel would one day occupy. But the Presence which accompanied them from Egypt and attended them in their desert wanderings was to be with them no longer. In its place, YHWH's angel would lead the people to the Promised Land. Despite the fact that YHWH's angel is frequently a synonym for YHWH himself, it appears not to be the case here. The context of Exod. 3:2 would suggest that when

referring to an angel, YHWH is speaking of himself.¹⁹² In the present text, however, the angel seems to be exclusive of YHWH personally. He refuses to accompany the people but sends his angel in his stead! This interpretation is substantiated in chapter 33:2,3. In that context the angel is to be responsible for guiding Israel and expelling their opponents from their path. But YHWH himself will not go up with them lest he consume them in the way.

Nonetheless it will be realized that the idea of an accompanying angel is an advance upon the situation facing Israel in verses 11-14. At that point in time, genocide appeared imminent, now the nation has a future to look forward to and YHWH's angel to lead them! S. R. Driver's hypothesis that these references to an angel in Exod. 32:34; 33:2-3 are later insertions is based on a need to reconcile the people's journeying on from Sinai and the refusal of YHWH to accompany them.¹⁹³ Most other scholars do not seem to detect a literary or source critical problem with the introduction of the angel of the Lord in this piece of narrative. Indeed, at the other extreme, McNeile suggests that the allusion to the angel betrays crude and anthropomorphic concepts

¹⁹²The angel (מַלְאָכְךָ) appeared in the burning bush (v 2) while God (יְהוָה) spoke to Moses from the bush (v 4) and declared himself to be the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (v 6).

¹⁹³S. R. Driver, op. cit., p. 356.

in what must have been a primitive religion.¹⁹⁴ The idea of an angelic ministry of providential care would therefore be of early origin. Whether or not one is dealing with an early pericope or later insertion may be difficult to decide, but the development it represents in the present context of Exod. 32-34 is perhaps more easily perceptible. The whole process of atonement and reconciliation in these chapters appears to go through various levels. These levels largely coincide with the four intercessions of Moses. "Anticipation and repetition are the hallmarks of the whole narrative."¹⁹⁵ It is not until the final intercession of chapter 34:8-9 that entire forgiveness is secured! The progression is unmistakable. After the first of Moses' intercessions the decision not to annihilate the people is made. Then in verses 31-34 punishment is postponed, a providential angel is sent but YHWH refuses to accompany the people himself. At the conclusion of Moses' third intercession YHWH further relents and promises his divine Presence with Israel as they leave Sinai (Exod. 33:12-17). Finally in a fourth prayer, Moses ventures again to plead for Israel's full forgiveness. This time he meets with success and the covenant is restored and reactivated (Exod.

¹⁹⁴ A. H. McNeile, The Book of Exodus (London: Methuen & Co, Ltd., 1908) on Exod. 32;34.

¹⁹⁵ B. S. Childs, Exodus (London: SCM Press, 1974), p. 571.

34:9, 10). In such a schematic progression witnessed to in these chapters of Exodus, the place of the attendant angel has clearly a part. .

Although Moses did not accomplish all that he had hoped for in this intercession and the full remission of Israel's sin remained illusive, a compromise had been reached involving a stay of execution. At some future, undesignated time, יְהוָה יִשְׁפֹּט, YHWH will judge his people for the apostasy of the golden calf. Many of the ancients believed that this "visitation" affected the rest of Israel's history. That is to say that because of this idolatrous sin the nation never ceased to be a debtor to the crime. And whatever adverse experience befell Israel, it was invariably attributed to their apostasy at Sinai. By way of contrast, many modern commentators find in the threat a reference to the reign of Jeroboam and the calamities that king brought upon God's people and their faith.¹⁹⁶ A number of other modern scholars see verse 34b as an ex post facto reference to the fall of the northern kingdom under Hoshea in 721 B.C. or to the fall of the southern kingdom under Jehoiachin in 597 B.C. or to the final collapse of Judah under Zedekiah in 587 B.C.¹⁹⁷ Most likely of these, in the

¹⁹⁶Ibid., p. 572.

¹⁹⁷E.g. Kuenen and Cornill cited in J. E. Carpenter and G. Hoodford, The Composition of the Hexateuch (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1902), p. 226; J. P. Hyatt, op. cit., p. 311; M. Roth, op. cit., pp. 251-2; A. H. McNeile, loc. cit.

present writer's mind, might be an allusion to the 721 B.C. date. It is the indication of the sacred historian in his explanation of the fall of the northern kingdom in II Kings 17:7-18 that the Jeroboamic calves (v 16) represented a cause. It might be possible that the Aaronide calf, dynamically associated with the Jeroboamic calves, would be seen in a similar light. However, the arguments must remain inconclusive for there is no substantial evidence that would tie YHWH's threat to any historical event and it would be pointless to add to the possibilities. Perhaps it is enough to perceive this threat of postponed punishment within its present context of the fracture and renewal of the covenant in Exod. 32-34. Viewed in this manner, it would represent one of the stages through which Israel progressed to achieve atonement with YHWH--somewhat related to the four levels of intercessory prayer engaged in by Moses which we discussed above. It represented a compromise situation in relationships between YHWH and his people and the actual event to which it referred was of little inherent significance. This is blatantly the perception of the sacred writer or redactor. In the final verse of the chapter a cursory reference is made to consequent execution of the threat--a plague is sent upon the people. No more is said than that! We have no details of the nature of the plague, how extensive it was or how many people were killed. Verse 35 serves to round out and

bring this stage of the narrative to an appropriate completion.

The MT of verse 35 reads ַןַןַן' ַןַןַן
...וַיַּכּוּ אֱלֹהִים (literally "And YHWH smote the people...."),
 so that we cannot even be sure that the instrument of
 vindication was a plague--though most commentators, an-
 cient and modern, so understand it. A smiting normally
 carries this connotation, though, as Clements points out,
 a sickness of some kind is equally possible here.¹⁹⁸ Yet
 so vague is this reference to "a smiting" that several
 guesses have been made as to its allusion. The Post-
 Reformation era witnessed the belief that it referred back
 to the slaughter of the 3,000 in verses 27, 28.¹⁹⁹
 C.F. Keil, by way of contrast, ascribes the "day of
 visitation" to a future event, particularly Kadesh:

The day of visitation came at length, when the
 stiff-necked people had filled up the measure
 of their sin through repeated rebellion against
 Jehovah and His servant Moses, and were sentenced
 at Kadesh to die out in the wilderness (Num.
 xiv.26sqq.).²⁰⁰

Modern scholarship is divided in its opinion as
 to what verse 35 refers. On the one hand, it might sig-
 nify a punishment following immediately upon the

¹⁹⁸R. E. Clements, Exodus (Cambridge: University Press, 1972), p. 210.

¹⁹⁹J. Calvin, op. cit., p. 1010; M. Poole, Annotations upon the Holy Bible, I (London: Samuel Holdworth, 1840), p. 190.

²⁰⁰C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 232.

apostasy.²⁰¹ Many suggest that verse 35 represents a sequel to verse 20 and completes the Elohist narrative.²⁰² There is no doubt that verse 35 reads coherently after verse 20. The problem arises, however, when one realizes that most of these commentators who want to place the verse after Moses' destruction of the calf (v 20) also wish to maintain that verses 15-24 form a solid Elohist tradition.²⁰³ If this is the case, it is difficult to imagine how verse 35 moved from a position within a core narrative to occupy a function totally unrelated to it. The alternative must be to postulate a different hand at work in the section comprising verses 21-24 from that at work in verses 15-20. This represents the conclusion of both Coats²⁰⁴ and Perdue.²⁰⁵ With a primary and secondary traditions observable in verses 15-24, it is much easier to understand how verse 35 might have been relocated by a redactor. Failure to discern a composite nature in verses 15-24 has forced McNeile to conclude that verse 35, out of place in its present position, is more properly

²⁰¹M. Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 252; cf. A. Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

²⁰²Wellhausen and Bantsch cited by S. R. Driver, *op. cit.*, p. 357; J. P. Hyatt, *op. cit.*, p. 311; G. W. Coats, *Rebellion in the Wilderness* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), p. 187; Perdue, p. 239.

²⁰³S. R. Driver and J. P. Hyatt.

²⁰⁴G. W. Coats, *loc. cit.*

²⁰⁵Perdue, *loc. cit.*

appropriate following verse 24. That is to say since the section comprising verses 15-24 represents a single unit of Elohistic tradition, it is more reasonable to believe verse 35 (also of Elohistic origin) formed a conclusion to that piece of narrative rather than having occupied a position within the Elohistic material. It is, however, the feeling of the present writer that verse 35 does not appear to be altogether suitable to follow verse 24.

There are no contextual criteria to suppose its inclusion there. The idea of YHWH punishing the people seems somewhat irrelevant to the preceding discourse of Aaron. If it is to be relocated to reflect an original intent, better that it should follow verse 20 for there it makes much better sense. And if it follows verse 20, it is more gratifying to consider that verses 15-24 reflect a composite authorship, verses 15-20 and verses 21-24 resulting from different hands.

On the other hand it is possible not to consider that the reference in verse 35 is to a punishment immediately following the apostasy which reading it as a sequel to verse 20 might suggest. Instead, one might view verse 35 as a proleptic announcement of the fulfillment of verse 34. The timing of the occasion for punishment is kept deliberately vague.²⁰⁶ Verse 34 alluded to an unspecified moment in history--the actual event seems to be of little inherent importance--the redactor's

²⁰⁶A. Dillmann, op. cit., pp. 343-344.

purpose in adding this final verse was simply to communicate to his reader that what had been previously announced did, in fact, come to pass and therefore to suitably conclude the subject matter in the preceding verses.²⁰⁷ Whether or not this is a more satisfactory understanding of the text is perhaps debatable, but it is certainly evident that this is the function given to verse 35 in its present context by the redactor.

A problem at the end of verse 35 arises in interpreting the phrase עַל אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ אֶת־הָעֵגֶל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אַהֲרֹן. Usually translated "because they made the calf that Aaron made," it would seem apparent that the phrase is composite in nature.²⁰⁸ The statement certainly appears to be contradictory. Obviously both Aaron and the people cannot have carried out the actual construction of the image. If the verse originally implicated the people's involvement in the building process, it is reasonable to suppose that the addition of אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אַהֲרֹן was made either to further the polemic against Aaron in

²⁰⁷Cf. Cassuto alludes to similar instances in scripture, e.g. Num. 14 recounts that after God's rebuke of the spies (vv 26-35) all but Joshua and Caleb died of a plague (vv 36-38). The narrative then returns to Moses' report of the reprimand to the people. Cf. B. S. Childs, op. cit., p. 572: "The final verse rounds off the theme of judgment in the chapter without having a close relation to the verses which precede."

²⁰⁸Hence A. Dillmann, op. cit., on v. 35; also S. E. Loewenstamm, p. 333; Lehming, pp. 43, 45 and Perdue, op. cit., p. 238.

these writings²⁰⁹ or a scribal correction to amend the
less exact עשר את-העגל.²¹⁰

The problem is further complicated by the fact that some sections of the narrative explicitly state that Aaron constructed the golden calf (vv 1-4, 23-24, 25), while others indicate that the people themselves were responsible for creating the image (vv 8, 20). This being the case the enigma of who created the calf cannot be solved unambiguously. It is not unreasonable to believe that two different traditions are evident in the chapter. But few modern commentators are prepared to use the concept of who constructed the image as a criterion for determining and defining the extent of sources or traditions in Exodus 32.²¹¹ Instead, as we have frequently observed, anomalies and incongruities which affected the 'structure' of the chapter formed the criteria for dividing the text according to source or tradition. The two intercessory prayers of Moses (vv 11-13 and 31-32), the three punishments meted out on the people (vv 20, 27-28 and 35) and Moses' surprise at seeing the calf (v 19) despite his prior knowledge of it (vv 7, 8) all contributed to facilitate a source division

²⁰⁹Perdue, loc. cit.

²¹⁰S. R. Driver, op. cit.

²¹¹The most notable exception to this is Lehming. See earlier discussion above.

of Exodus 32. The question of who made the calf was not deemed significant enough to aid in the process of defining and delimiting traditions.

The truth of the matter is that verses 8 and 20 do not give clear indication that the writer actually considered that the people (as opposed to Aaron) constructed the golden calf. In both instances "they" (viz. the people) is used collectively referring to the entire nation, which obviously includes Aaron. Neither is an attempt to specify who did the actual building. Rather, their role is more clearly to apportion guilt upon all the people for all were responsible to one degree or another. The ring-leaders who demanded the image and instigated the apostasy, the corroborators who supplied the material for the calf's construction, the actual builders and the rest who quietly acquiesced in the crime all bore responsibility in the nation's sin. As we have noted previously, this has seemed the intent of the chapter as a whole. Israel displayed themselves as guilty before God, the entire nation had participated in the apostasy, YHWH's threat of genocide was real enough and atonement had to be sought for everyone. It is within this context that verses 8 and 20 need to be viewed. The statement "they made a golden calf" can best be understood not in the sense of their actual building of it but in terms of their complicity in the crime.

How can this enable one to better comprehend the meaning of verse 35? It is the feeling of the present writer that the awkwardness of the phrase indicates a later addition to the text. The verse probably intended to convey the certainty of fulfillment of YHWH's threat upon Israel in the previous verse. That is to say, the writer sought to conclude this section of the narrative by indicating that God's threat of punishment did, in fact, come to pass. The verse might have read, "And YHWH smote the people because they made the calf." The sense would then have been the same as that perceived in verses 8 and 20--not that they actually were engaged in the construction of the idol, but that they participated in the responsibility of its erection. A later redactor may have added the words "which Aaron made" to make the account more exact. The result was a slight awkwardness which does not detract from the meaning of the passage. Both Aaron and the people were responsible for making the calf.

Despite a different methodology employed in arriving at this conclusion and a certain reluctance on his part to recognize the composite nature of the verse, this is essentially the position affirmed by John Calvin. He writes:

Meanwhile he (Moses) commends the mercy of God in having spared Aaron, whilst he speaks of the calf as his work, as well as of the whole of the people; in a different way indeed, for Aaron

formed the calf at their request; still the criminality was common to them.²¹²

Let it be said that awkwardness in the text is not synonymous with contradiction. It is evident that the final redactor who appended the last phrase in the verse saw no inherent contradiction in the sense of the sentence. And if we are not involved in contradiction per se then we need neither postulate diverse traditions as many moderns do nor emend the text from לשם to לעלם and render the phrase "because they worshipped the calf which Aaron made" as do the Syriac, Arabic and Samaritan Pentateuch versions and the targumim of Onkelos and Pseudo-Jonathan.²¹³ Despite the attractiveness of this latter interpretation it is the conviction of the present writer that the awkwardness of the text is not too difficult to live with. That is not to say that the ancients have done an injustice to the text. On the contrary, the emendation retains the intent of the message of verse 35.

Exodus 32 closes with the apostasy decidedly part of Israel's history as the nation seeks atonement with YHWH. After a second intercession, the nation has reclaimed a modicum of divine favour. Not only will they avoid destruction but the promises given to the Patriarchs,

²¹²J. Calvin, op. cit., p. 1010.

²¹³Cf. M. Poole, Annotations upon the Holy Bible, op. cit., p. 190. He suggests that the verb "to make" can be and is used to imply worship and cites Exod. 10:25; Judg. 13:15 and I Kgs. 18:26 as examples of such use.

especially concerning the provision of land, would still find their fulfillments in them. Yet forgiveness was not complete. The assurance of their special election and YHWH's presence in their midst remained illusive. They would come only with further intercession and petition. It is probable that Israel was aware that God could forgive sin in this early tradition of the Old Testament. The nation had flagrantly disregarded the expressed will of YHWH and sought their reconstitution as his people. Such a reconciliation is seen not in terms of pardon per se but in terms of the continuing presence of YHWH with the nation. In the book of Exodus this is most clearly perceived in the tabernacle. It represented the divine presence in the midst of the nation. It stood in opposition to the false worship depicted in association with the heinous calf. It is that to which the book of Exodus moves and reaches its climax as YHWH's וַיֵּשְׁבֶה overshadows the tabernacle and his presence resides within it. The episode of the golden calf represents a retrograde interruption in the canonical shaping of the book but one which does not ultimately impede the manifestation of God's glory!

CONCLUSION

It is clear from the present study that the thirty-second chapter of Exodus is complex in its details. At its simplest level, the narrative purports to relate the incident of Israel's great apostasy on the very threshold of its existence as a theocratic national entity. The story is vividly portrayed and has caught the imagination and scrutiny of scholars, preachers and artists down through the centuries. While Moses was absent from the Israelite camp on Mount Sinai obtaining the tablets of the Law from YHWH, the people erected a visual substitution of the God whom they perceived had delivered them out of the land of Egypt.

The record of Israel's sin was undoubtedly included in the sacred writings both for didactic purposes and as an exhortation to subsequent generations to keep the commandments delivered to Moses. In the first instance, the chapter represents an instruction to the people of the covenant regarding the long-suffering covenant love which YHWH has for them. Even in their infidelity, YHWH remains faithful to the promises made to their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In the second instance, the severity of the nation's crime is made explicit. YHWH's forgiveness is achieved only at considerable cost and, were it not for the timely intervention of Moses, ostensibly may not have been

achieved at all! The seriousness of the sin is further underlined with the recounting of the Levitical slaughter, the divine absence and the promise of a plague.

From our study of the early history of the text's interpretation, one has readily discerned that the incident was roundly condemned by all the ancient commentators. Indeed, it was not until the rise of the Christian polemic of the Church Fathers who argued that the covenant had in fact been annulled at Sinai and that the covenant status of Israel as God's chosen people had been transferred later to the Church that prompted a Jewish apologia of the sin of the golden calf in Amoraic times. Interestingly, even the Hellenistic-Jewish writers who very likely encountered a suspicion of non-Greek ideas, did not engage in an extensive Jewish polemic regarding the incident of the golden calf. Josephus, we noted, ignored the episode altogether and removed the entire account from his translation.

The mediaeval era built upon the earlier contributions of the rabbinic age. Exodus 32 continued to be viewed as a whole and its theological role within the entire canon was deemed crucial. Since a systematizing of belief represented an attempt to come to grips with every aspect of the scriptures, the narrative of the golden calf was seen as an integral part of the unfolding style of the exodus and an indispensable part of the biblical message. Issues raised by a scrutiny

of textual problems were invariably dealt with within the context of a unified chapter. As a result, we were able to discover some overarching themes and interests present in the narrative which received the attention of the mediaevalists.

Though the Reformation brought with it renewed interest in the understanding of the plain meaning of the biblical material and a serious study of the problems inherent in the text, it remained the achievement of the late nineteenth century critics to posit different sources within the Exodus chapter to account for the anomalies within the material. The works of Ewald, Kuenen and Dillmann stand as important landmarks in the process that led to the general acceptance of the critical conclusions.

Unfortunately, the composite nature of Exodus 32 is not easily definable--a fact clearly demonstrated in our study of the history of the text's interpretation. Philological and syntactical evidence to substantiate source claims are scant. We have taken the approach in the present investigation that the chapter embodies old Epic tradition and possibly contains later Deuteronomic accretions. However, of necessity, those conclusions must remain tentative. Different theories of composition abound and the nature of the chapter cannot be ascertained without recourse to them. One must remain

appreciative of the balance of scholarly opinion, both ancient and modern, which acts as an external control upon the interpretation of the text and enables one to dismiss the excesses of commentators of every age. Most helpful in this regard have been the early Greek versions and the works of Rashi, Abraham Ibn Ezra, Maimonides, Abravanel, Nachmanides, Lapidé, Paul of Burgos, Calvin, Poole, Visorius, Calmet, Ewald, Keil, Kalisch, Murphy, Kuenen, Dillmann, Driver, Eissfeldt, Beyerlin, Loewenstamm, Davies and Childs. These have greatly contributed to our corpus of knowledge on Exodus 32 and have given us a foundation on which we can build a reasoned exegesis of the passage. This has provided the basis of the present study. However, given the purpose of the present investigation to set out a full and exhaustive interpretation of Exodus chapter thirty-two, it is plain that there is no possible way that one can summarize an exegesis in a conclusion. If one were to say anything, it would be merely a pale reflection of the substance of the text. Exegesis stands on its own.

Our study does confirm that Exodus 32 represents a central corpus of tradition which has stimulated the thinking of scholars of every age. As such, the chapter deserves the attention that it

has received in this investigation. We have seen that the history of the passage's interpretation is very diverse. In many instances one is aware that the critical antipathy to pre-Enlightenment exegesis is justified. Our investigation has revealed that a great deal of ancient scholarship represents a departure from a strict adherence to the plain meaning of the text and seeks to address the rather parochial concerns of its day. However, the judgments of more recent history upon the past must not go unqualified. Particularly significant in reappraising the value of ancient and modern scholarship is the work of Brevard S. Childs as it is developed in his idea of "canonical criticism."

Through the process of canonical criticism, Childs does not want to return to the pre-critical era as if the critical age of the past one hundred years never existed. Rather, Childs insists that there may be values in the interpretive process that we have overlooked. We have found the following insights of canonical criticism to be fruitful: first, there is a renewed emphasis upon the contemporary meaning of the biblical material. That is to say, canonical criticism seeks to understand a passage's meaning from the standpoint of faith as the vox Dei to the Church. The Bible is not merely an ancient

textbook of Jewish and Christian religion, but a confessional statement of belief through which God continues to encounter his people.

Second, because of this prior faith commitment to interpreting the scriptures, it follows that a biblical text is to be read within the context of the canon since the scriptures function normatively in accordance with the canonical shape given them by the Church. It has been demonstrated that, in the case of Exodus 32, the primary significance of the story is didactic. The ancient community of faith was at pains not so much to recount an historical event in the life of Israel, though that this was also at stake cannot be denied, as it was to highlight the necessity of obedience to the laws delivered to Moses, particularly those in regard to worship. In so doing, the Old Testament Church attempted to communicate God's revelatory events eschatologically by pointing beyond themselves to later generations of faith.

Third, by understanding the scriptures as the creed of the Church, canonical criticism frees one from the a priori search for historical reliability and allows the biblical material to speak for itself as part of the context of the scripture's final form. This affords a more comprehensive exegesis of a particular passage.

Fourth, canonical criticism has managed to tie together event and witness, history and theology, in biblical interpretation. In so doing it has played a useful part in restoring some degree of objectivity to the exegetical enterprise in a day in which historical investigation has produced many highly speculative ideas of a passage's meaning.

Fifth, Childs has demonstrated the value of renewed study of the work of biblical scholars in earlier eras. We have seen in the present investigation that there is much that has been helpful to us in understanding Exodus 32 which has emerged from ancient as well as modern times.

Finally, by bypassing the a priori application of the canons of historical enquiry to determine the validity of a text and with its emphasis upon the Old Testament as the scriptures of the Church, canonical criticism may very well side-step the old liberal-conservative impasse and allow the different academies a greater openness to each other. One is realistic enough to recognize that their respective entrenched positions would preclude full agreement. Nevertheless much could be achieved by each lending an ear to the other, a phenomenon which canonical criticism might make possible.

With these six considerations in mind, the present study vindicates, to a degree, the relevance

of what is involved in canonical criticism. Yet it is evident that this hermeneutical paradigm is still in its early days and two things must be borne in mind as a result. The first is that the history of biblical interpretation has clearly demonstrated that hermeneutical paradigms are transient and that the very idea of interpreting a text can change to reflect the exegete's Sitz im Leben. The plea of canonical criticism is that it be treated with openness both in regard to its nature as a tool for interpretation and in its attempt to resurrect the understanding of men of long ago. In matters of significant dispute in biblical interpretation, canonical criticism may enable us to recover the witness of the Church over the centuries. Scholars, having won the freedom to do critical work, may, in fact, bind themselves too tightly to what may be the relative concerns of their own age and, within this restraint, fail to appreciate rival attempts at understanding the text.

In the second instance, our study has made clear how complex a process of interpretation is. One is involved in theological, historical, linguistic and literal considerations. Combining them is an art and not a science. It is necessary to proceed with great caution and sensitivity. Ultimately, one

one will be engaged in evaluating one's own conclusions as well as the results of others. Such evaluation, central to the climax of the work of exegesis, is a fundamental aspect in the operation of canonical criticism. The present exegesis of Exodus 32 must be judged in the light of that type of evaluation.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

A THEMATIC APPROACH TO THE BOOK OF EXODUS

Obviously several themes are intertwined in the book of Exodus. G. Henton Davies cites the dominant one as the idea of God's presence with his people. "...common to both history and law in Exodus," he writes, "is the theme of the Presence, and it may not unfairly be claimed that this theme confers upon the diversity of the book its fundamental yet manifest unity. The book like Israel finds its origins and reveals its originality in this Presence theme" (G. H. Davies, op. cit., p. 21).

Phythian-Adams also believes this to be the all-pervading idea in Exodus--an idea which he extends to the entire canon of sacred writings. (W. J. Phythian-Adams, The People and The Presence: A Study of the At-one-ment (London: Oxford University Press, 1942). Daube, on the other hand, opts for the idea of covenant as the central one (loc. cit.). He asserts that the Exodus narrators drew on already existing social customs to tell their story which in turn had the effect of stimulating the nature of their laws. Because an event such as slavery can be viewed forensically, that is to say because slavery figured in the social set-up of the nation, Daube seems to imply that the custom existed à priori and as Israel formulated her history, she did so utilizing the concepts underlying her legal formulations. As slavery

existed as a social custom, so Israel's theocratic existence emerged in accord with that forensic paradigm. The nation, too, was once a slave. Daube's thesis seems, however, to be too greatly influenced by his consideration that the legal code determined Israel's history.

The concept of the people and the Presence is a decidedly more obvious observation of the nature and intent of the book. Unquestionably the book opens with a picture of a people and a divine absence, only to be translated, through the process of deliverance, to the intimacy of tabernacle worship. The major thrust of the material has been accounted for, but in using such an all-pervasive concept as Presence it may be that too much important material is left with doubtful relevance to the theme. Since the correctness of the thematic concept of Presence cannot reasonably be disputed, in seeking a narrower theme, it is necessary to retain the dimension of the divine Presence. It is at this point that the idea of Theocracy or God's Sovereignty presents itself for consideration as the thematic principle at work in the structure of the book of Exodus.

Theocracy is one aspect of Presence. It emphasizes the ruling nature of the Presence, YHWH's Kingship over Israel. Davies concedes this point when he states that "the Presence of the Lord is in effect the kingship of the Lord in any given situation. The royal commission of the Lord is made known in the burning bush; the divine king is present in Egypt to contest Pharaoh's

claim to lordship over Israel. In his control and command of natural phenomena whether to inflict calamity or to save and feed his people, the Lord of nature is present. Sinai is the seat of Israel's king whence the divine laws are proclaimed, and the covenant and justice are enacted, and to which Israel brings the worship and sacrifice due to a redeemer king. The God of Israel is King, and his activities are those of a king. His Presence is always a ruling Presence for it is the Presence of the Savior and King of Israel."

It is in the theme of the kingship that the ideological foundation of the book lies. The concept of kingship involves the idea of a king, of a people and of a domain. All of these are clearly present in Exodus. Initially the people are serving Pharaoh in Egypt--effectively he is their king. The struggle with the Egyptian pantheon (chh. 7-12) can only be considered a battle for sovereignty. YHWH vindicates His authority and rule over the helpless gods of Egypt and over Pharaoh, the sacral king. With a strong hand YHWH delivers His people from the domain of the demonic, across the Sea to new territory where He reveals Himself in a theophany on Mt. Sinai. It has been noted before that the purpose of the exodus cannot be considered solely in terms of release from bondage, but it contained the elements necessary for the establishment of a theocracy--a people subject to the authority of their God who alone was their

king and ruler. In the last section of the book the people are depicted as obedient servants of YHWH. The kingship of Pharoah has been replaced by that of YHWH.

This concept of kingship is further substantiated in the book where the references to YHWH as king are not merely ideological. Three will be cited. First of all, there is in the idea of the covenant an implicit allusion. The work of George E. Mendenhall has been such that Hittite suzerainty treaties have been seen as somewhat analogous to the Hebrew covenant form. Without spelling out the details of this well-cited work, it may be affirmed with reasonable certainty that the parallels between the Decalogue and the Hittite treaty are such as to draw the implication of an analogous relationship between YHWH and the Hittite suzerain who wished to lay down a code of behaviour for his vassal subjects. This being the case the idea of covenant being an expression of YHWH's kingship is appropriate to the message of the book.

A second substantiation of the concept of the kingship of YHWH lies in the nature of the tabernacle, and in particular, the nature of the ark of the covenant. In his essay on the Tent and the Ark, von Rad outlines a tradition which suggested that the Ark represented the throne of YHWH, the idea being that YHWH was enthroned above the cherubim (II Kgs. 19:15). He rose from his throne when camp was broken and sat on it after a halt

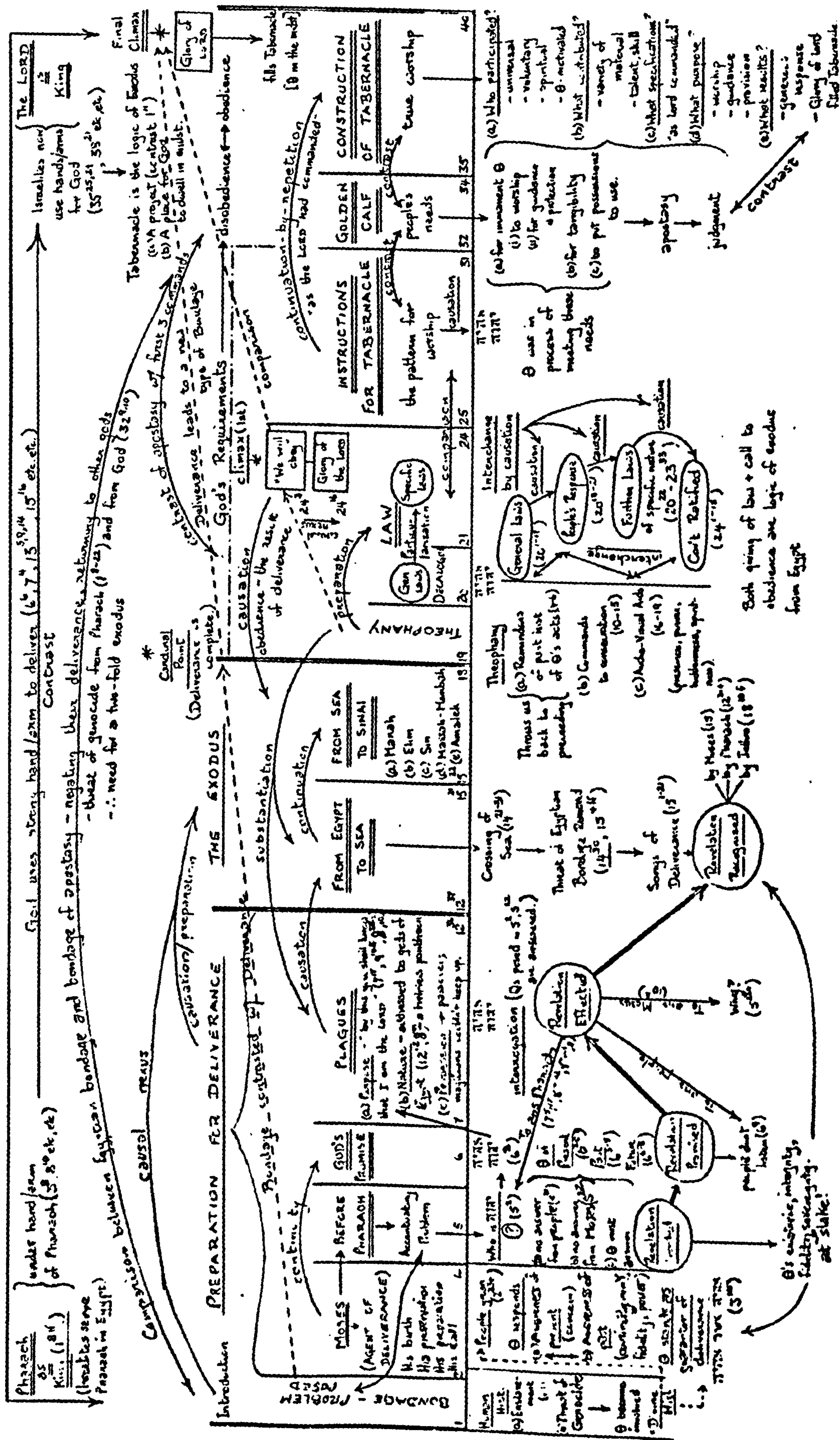
had been made. The idea is not without parallel in the ancient Near East, for example, Ishtar is sitting on the throne of the cherubim in the Assyrian rock relief at Maltaia. The empty throne also finds corroboration in two Phoenician thrones of Astarte, both of which are empty. If we do allow for the Ark being a type of throne, one could only imagine its occupant to be the Mighty One of Israel.

A third element within the book corroborating our thematic assertion of kingship is the mythical connotations of the Song of the Sea (Exodus 15). Otto Eissfeldt has suggested that this song expressed the idea of an acknowledgment of YHWH as King of His people for all eternity. It remains the work of Frank Cross, however, to draw parallels between the Song and the mythic cycle involving the conflict between Yamm (Prince Sea) and Ba'al-Haddu. Admittedly the parallel is not such as to describe the historical event mythologically, but as Cross himself suggests, "in choosing the event of the sea, Israel drew upon available symbols and language which retained power and meaning even when the old mythic patterns which gave them birth had been attenuated or broken by Israel's austere historical consciousness" (F. M. Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973). Yet the basic idea of Ba'al establishing himself as king of the assembly of the gods and subsequently having a temple built for him in

his honour runs somewhat parallel to the demonstration of YHWH's sovereignty over the Egyptian pantheon and the instructions in Exod. 25ff. to build a tabernacle. If this be coupled with the explicit reference in the Song to YHWH's rule (Exod. 15:18), it may be thought that the evidence was sufficient to indicate a parallel concern with the idea of kingship.

APPENDIX B

A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK OF EXODUS



APPENDIX C

LITERARY ANALYSES OF EXODUS 32

Rendtorff: Basically D with Sinai & Exodus core traditions.

Childs 1974	J	Rj	J	Rd	J
Bailey 1971	E	D	E	P	D
Hyatt 1971	E	Rd	E	E2	E
Coats 1968	J/E	D	J	2nd	J2?
Davies 1967	E	Rd	E	J	E
Stalker 1962	E	R	E	J	E/Rje
Beyerlin 1961	E	E2	E	E expansions	E2
Lehmann 1960	P1	J	Rje	P2	Rje
Lewy 1955	J	Rd	Jp	En	J
Noth 1948	E	D	J	E	J
Keyser 1940	E	J	E	J	SP
Beer 1939	E	2nd	J1	E	2nd
Gressmann 1929	J	E	2nd	J	2nd
Eissfeldt 1922	E	R	E	L	E
Bennett	E	Rje	SP	E	Rje
Driver 1911	E	Rje	SP	E	J
McNeile 1908	E	Rd	RP	E	Rje
Carpenter 1902	E	JE	E	J	E
Steuernagel	E	Rd	E	Rd	E
Bacon 1894	E	J	Rd	J	E
Dillmann 1880	C	A	B/C	B	C
Colenso 1872	O.S.	D	O.S.	O.S.	O.S.
verses	6	7	8	9	14